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Beth Trinchero

Loyola Marymount University, btrinchero@gmail.com

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Counter Narrating the Media's Master Narrative:

A Case Study of Victory High School

by

Beth Trinchero

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2011

Counter Narrating the Media's Master Narrative:
A Qualitative Case Study of Victory High School

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Beth Trinchero

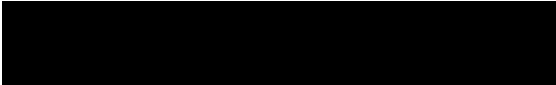
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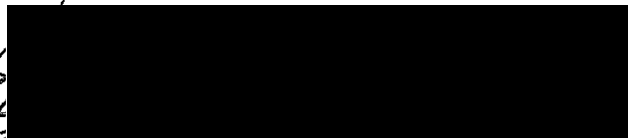
This dissertation written by Beth A. Trincherro, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

4 / 15 / 2011

Date

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the four sources
that gave me the gifts I needed to bring it to fruition:

To my father, who inspired me to be an educator,
and to my mother, who inspired me to serve the marginalized,
thank you both for helping me to live out all of my dreams, especially this one.

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ABSTRACT

Counter Narrating the Media's Master Narrative:

A Case Study of Victory High School

By

Beth Trinchero

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), Berliner and Biddle (1995) have argued media have assisted leaders in creating a “manufactured crisis” (p. 4) about America’s public schools to scapegoat educators, push reforms, and minimize societal problems, such as systemic racism and declining economic growth, particularly in urban areas. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) functions as an important articulation of this crisis (Granger, 2008).

Utilizing the theoretical lenses of master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman 1988), this study employed critical discourse analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) to unmask the mainstream media’s master narrative, or dominant story, about Victory High School (VHS), which was reconstituted under the authority of the NCLB Act (2001). Findings revealed a master narrative that racialized economic competition, vilified community members, and exonerated neoliberal reforms.

Drawing on the critical race methodology of counter-narratives (Yosso, 2006), individual and focus group interviews with 12 VHS teachers, alumni, and community elders illustrated how reforms fragmented this school community, destroying collective social capital, while protecting the interests of capitalism and neoliberalism.

By revealing the interests protected by the media's master narrative and beginning a counter-narrative voiced by members of the community, this study contributes to recasting the history of the VHS community, to understanding the intersections between race and class in working class communities of color, and to exposing the impact of neoliberal educational reforms on urban schools.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Introduction

He sat in the front row of my fifth period English 10A class. For some reason he adopted me, a brand new teacher, a White female who had attended Catholic high school and who had recently fled a doctorate program in English in order, in her words, to “learn how to teach” and to “help students who didn’t know they could go to college” do so. From day one, he made himself helpful, handing out papers and quieting other students. He dubbed me “Ms. T” and on the days when I wanted to run screaming from the classroom because it was just too hard, he sat there with a smile on his face and a funny comment on his lips. Because of David, a pseudonym, and a host of other colleagues, I survived my first year at Victory High School (VHS), a pseudonym, a mammoth 3-track, year round campus located in Los Angeles, California.

For the next three years, David visited me often, asking me for help on his assignments or just stopping in to joke around with me. I visited with his father at parent nights and went to his baseball games after school. His senior year I once again became his teacher. With the benefit of two years of teaching behind me, I was more experienced and equipped to give my students a quality writing class in their senior year. David, though, had discovered girls. He caught a mean case of senioritis that saw him practically kicked off the baseball team and almost suspended from school. It was my turn to return the favor. I became his cheerleader, coaxing him to finish his assignments, and advocate, going to bat for him with the dean and his coach. I never gave up on him, just as he had

never given up on me. That June 2006 I watched as he graduated and after the ceremony we hugged, both celebrating our successes.

Two years later, in the month of September, I found myself pinned between two large groups of screaming students. On one side stood students I had known for years, but whom I could barely recognize. They had mutated into a loud, excited group and they chanted in unison, “P3, P3, P3.”

The Spirit Rally, the first in recent history, would be held that day and the lunch prior to the event had turned into a show of pride, energy, and identity. Students carried signs, chanted, and marched, all in an effort to represent their small learning community (SLC). Watching from the middle of the raucous groups, I felt grateful that finally, after five years, the students had coalesced around a shared group identity: students in our SLC, P3, which stood for People, Power, and Passion, an invented moniker meant to capture the essential components of social justice. The transition from large, comprehensive urban high school to wall-to-wall SLCs had been an arduous journey. Signs of success had begun to manifest themselves: student attendance, graduation rates and student achievement had increased. And there was this scene, students claiming membership in their SLC, proudly and loudly.

Over one year later, on a beautiful balmy December day, I made my way cautiously out to the campus’ large quad. Students had been sending each other text messages all day, spreading the word about a sixth period sit-in and walkout. The demonstration was prompted by an announcement made by the school district that effective July 1, 2010, VHS would be reconstituted under the authority of the No Child

Left Behind Act. Students learned of this announcement informally, on the five o' clock news a few days before.

When I rounded the corner to the quad, I expected to see chaos, but instead was greeted by a calm, peaceful group of about 100 students sitting on the green grass. I silently blessed the sight, grateful that students were safe and proud that *my* P3 students were leading the efforts. As I joined a small group of teachers overlooking the scene, a wave of emotions overcame me and I began to cry. In my heart, I felt the students were protesting for us—for their teachers who would be forced to reapply for their jobs and might not be rehired. Sharing my thoughts with my colleagues, I was reminded that tears of sorrow were not needed. Instead, I should be joyful for this moment marked what was so special about VHS students and teachers: in the face of injustice, they unite together, raise their voices, and fight for a more just outcome.

All three of these stories form the start of a counter-narrative about VHS that revolved around the belief that relationships, community and social justice matter in large urban high schools. Relying on personal experience and related in a narrative fashion, these vignettes illustrated that a school, especially as complex as VHS, cannot be judged solely on test scores or media accounts. Instead, the measure of a campus so complex can only be conducted by first listening to the individual stories of the students, families, teachers and staff who inhabit it.

Statement of the Problem

For decades, due to low standardized test scores, VHS and its students, parents, and teachers had been crafted as a “failing” public school community in local and

national mainstream media outlets, such as newspapers, magazines, and television news. The mainstream media's master narrative of VHS as a "failing" school assisted the dominant group, which in the United States is White, male, upper-class, Christian, and heterosexual, in maintaining their racial and economic superiority through subtle, ideological consent-hegemony.

Althusser (1971) identified two distinct apparatuses of the state: repressive and ideological. The military, police, prisons, and courts are examples of repressive state apparatuses that depend upon the use of force or violence to control citizens. Religious organizations, schools, families, and media are examples of ideological apparatuses that depend upon the deployment of ideology to control citizens. Althusser (1971) defined ideology as "systems of representation" that construct real material conditions through their presence in apparatuses and their "interpellation, or hailing" of subjects (p. 163). The "ruling" (p. 155) group operates both the repressive and ideological apparatuses and in this way maintains its dominance over subordinate groups.

Similar to Althusser (1971), Gramsci (1971) argued that the state has two ways to gain the "consent" (p. 12) of its citizens. The first, overt physical force, most often will be utilized at times of crisis in an effort to immediately control citizens. The second, hegemony, manifests as the way in which a dominant group subtly controls "the general direction imposed on social life" (p. 12) and thus covertly convinces a subordinate group to accept its inferior status. Since hegemony garners the consent of the masses in a less violent manner it is deployed more often. However, since it is more deceptive in application, hegemony is more difficult to detect.

To ground his theory of hegemony, Gramsci (1985) pointed to several organizations outside of the government, such as the Catholic church, trade unions, and schools, each of which promote beliefs that benefit the dominant class while placating subordinate groups. The press serves as the “most prominent and dynamic” (Gramsci, 1985, p. 389) organization promulgating hegemony. By functioning as the seeming “organs of public opinion” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 80), newspapers can mobilize the greatest number of people to not only consent to their subordination, but also participate in the maintenance of it.

As Gramsci (1971) and Althusser (1971) identified, schools and media have deep connections to the state, serving as vehicles through which to disseminate government beliefs, legal policies, and ideology. The year 1983 marked such a moment. At this moment, The National Commission on Excellence published *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a report that argued the United States’ education system was faltering, losing ground in math, science, and technology to other countries in the world, a situation that jeopardized the United States’ economy, safety, and success. Three years later, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy published its report, *A Nation Prepared* (Green, 2009), which echoed that the United States’ success depends upon improving teacher and student performance. These reports cemented in the minds of citizens that the success of the United States as a global superpower depended on the success of its public schools and that currently both were in a steep decline.

Berliner and Biddle (1995) argued that since *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the media has played an immense role in

helping to perpetuate myths about public schools in America. The crisis in public schools, as they saw it, is a manufactured one, created by government and business leaders in an effort to scapegoat educators, push favored reform efforts, and focus attention away from societal problems, such as poverty, systemic racism, and declining economic growth, particularly in urban areas (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The media function as the outlet for these government and business leaders to spread their message and to attain their agenda (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The cohesion of the message carried by the media and the sheer volume of media stories sway public opinion, as individuals begin to truly believe that American schools are in a “rotten’ state” (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 11).

Most recently, the latest articulation of this crisis has been generated around the federal education policy No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act which requires the publication of test results via newspapers or other media outlets, in an effort to illustrate which schools are performing well and which are performing poorly (Lipman, 2009). In doing this, media affirm the value of the NCLB policy and operate as the mouth of the government, but do so without acknowledgment, choosing instead to cling to their status of objective purveyors of truth.

The media function as the vehicle to disseminate a message that assists in the maintenance of capitalism and institutional racism. The media publish reports that separate schools and, by extension, students into piles of success and piles of failure (McDermott & Varenne, 1995) . The competitive nature of this separation serves to reinforce capitalism’s presence in American society. Naturally, the separation aligns to

income distribution and skin color, as low-performing schools often consist of students of color in low-income communities. As such, then, this separation reinforces class stratification, which occurs in capitalist economic systems (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Further, the media's publication of school's performance reinforces the discourse and "logic of deficit," a belief that low-income students of color cannot be successful. (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). This discourse matches a long-standing belief in this country that non-White people are inferior, a discourse that has its roots in the origin of this country and the perpetuation of the discourse of Manifest Destiny (Horsman, 1981). As Horsman (1981) explained by 1850 a belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race became linked with discussions about America's economic prosperity and expansion. As a result of this belief, people of other races were cast as inferior, which naturally aided in the colonization, exploitation and oppression of them (Horsman, 1981). Discourses that portray people of color as deficient rely upon this history of oppression and assist in perpetuating the privileges of Whiteness at the expense of people of color (McIntosh, 1990).

In the case of VHS, local and national media have aided in creating a "manufactured crisis" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) via a master narrative of a "failing" school that can only be repaired by punitive reform efforts enacted by representatives of local, state, and federal government. Most recent among these reforms has been school reconstitution authorized under the NCLB Act and advanced as policy by the Obama administration. Aligned with capitalism, historical racism, and educational policy, this master narrative affirms and upholds the hegemony of the dominant society, which is

White, male, upper class, and heterosexual. Media coverage secures consent of the masses by focusing on deficits of this working class community of color, eliding causes of economic conditions caused by globalization, and exculpating from responsibility representatives and mechanisms of government systems. Rather than provide a rich history of the school by deeply investigating the strengths of the community, revealing economic causes behind poverty in the community, and rendering blame on representatives and mechanisms of the government system, the media have deployed stereotypical descriptors, reductive metaphors, and a dichotomizing narrative frameworks all of which condone and even enhance the continuing oppression of the VHS community and its members.

Purpose of the Study

Using the lenses of master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), Critical Race Theory, or CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) this study engaged a critical discourse analysis (Luke, 1995) of the media coverage of VHS in an effort to unmask the master narrative, or overarching story, constructed by this coverage and to explore the interests protected by it. In doing this, this study deconstructed the pervasive ways in which the media assist in demonizing and devaluing working class communities of color. By exposing the distortions in the media's master narrative about VHS, this study interrupted this oppressive discourse in order to open a space for an alternative discourse, or counter-narrative, to exist and to germinate. Through these efforts, this study created conditions to recuperate the history of this community.

Young (2000) identified five types of oppression, two of which are relevant in this study: marginalization and powerlessness. According to Young (2000) marginalization can lead to “material deprivation” (p. 41) and to denying individuals the opportunity to interact with and recognize themselves within dominant society (Young, 2000). Powerlessness occurs when power is exercised over someone without that person having an opportunity to reciprocate (Young, 2000). Oppression in each of these forms can be inflicted during “ordinary interactions” (p. 36) such as reading the daily newspaper (Young, 2000).

By crafting a specific master narrative about the members of the VHS community, the media has succeeded in marginalizing these individuals. In addition, the media’s master narrative about VHS has posited students and their families as powerless, lacking the authority to participate in the production, distribution or consumption of their image. VHS community members have not had the opportunity to exercise their authority over their portrayal by the media, and as such community members have been cut off from the expansive, emancipatory effects of engaging such authority (Young, 2000).

Based on the critical race methodology of counter-narratives (Yosso, 2006), I conducted interviews with VHS teachers, alumni, and community elders in order to hear and share their unique, personal narratives about attending school at VHS, working at the school site, and living in the community surrounding the campus. By engaging VHS community members to narrate their own story, this study provides a vehicle through which they can deploy the power of their voices, ideas, and creativity to reject marginalization and deficit-style thinking. Rather than rely on the “master’s tools” to

“dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1984), this project enabled community members to wield the tool of their own voices and in doing so to explore new revolutionary spaces in which to participate in the development and deployment of counter-hegemonic, non-oppressive discourses about their school, community and experiences. The use of social capital theory engendered an analysis of this working class community of color that was not solely dependent on the lack of capital, but instead was dependent upon the presence of dense networks of social relationships that benefitted members.

By unmasking the oppressive master narrative that demonized the VHS campus and by documenting the rich history of this school and community through the voices of the individuals who have lived it, this study recuperated this community’s history and shared it in the words of those who lived it. Through the reframing of this community in a way that denied deficit-laden stereotypes, this study transformed the image of the VHS community and posited the strengths that existed within the community and its inhabitants. In sum, this study itself operated as a counter-narrative about this resilient community and its members.

Theoretical Framework

This study unmasked the master narrative in the media’s coverage of VHS and exposed the interests protected by this master narrative. To do this, this study relied upon a tripartite theoretical framework (Brown, 2004). Master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984) and Critical Race Theory, or CRT, (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, 2006; Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009) facilitated the unmasking of the master narrative and exposed the interests of that master narrative, whereas social

capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) facilitated the reframing of the VHS community in a positive way by illustrating the numerous networks of relationships that thrived within this community.

Master Narrative Theory

In 1977 French postmodern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard coined the term metanarrative, or grand narrative, defining it as an “institutionalized” or “canonical,” narrative, a story that was meant to “rule” all other stories (as cited in Klein, 1995). In contrast to these grand narratives, Lyotard posited local narratives, which did not uphold the “tired old grand history” (as cited in Klein, 1995). In his work, *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard (1984) declared that as a result of scientific and technological advances postmodernism should be defined as disbelief in these metanarratives and a turn toward local narratives. Following Lyotard’s suggestion, this study revealed the story that controlled all other stories about VHS and rejected it in favor of embracing localized personal narratives of VHS community members.

By uniting a group of stories about a topic in order to form one cohesive, larger story (Cox & Stromquist, 1998), master narratives emerged as the dominant discursive agent and enabled the closing of discourse, so that other narratives could not interrupt its perpetuity (Stanley, 2007). As such, master narratives assisted in perpetuating the ideology and therefore power of the dominant society (Stanley, 2007). Such a situation occurred with texts about the VHS community, as a majority of these deployed a repetitive narrative about the school and the community, which through continuous use emerged as the seeming objective truth.

Numerous researchers have illustrated the ways in which master narratives function to maintain the dominance of one group over another. For example, Lawless (2003) illustrated how the master narrative in religion facilitates the subjugation of women in favor of the subordination of men. Further, Stanley (2007) illustrated how academic research relies on a positivist master narrative, which assists in promoting the research of White, male academics. In the field of education, research has focused on the master narratives present in history textbooks (Alridge, 2006; Swartz, 1992), classroom pedagogy (Swartz, 1992), and beliefs that perpetuate deficit theories about the academic achievement of minority students, such as Chicano/a students (Yosso, 2006). This study adds to this research, linking master narrative theory to media, the educational system and its policies, and the portrayal of a working class community of color.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT developed out of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), a branch of legal study concerned with ways in which the American legal and judicial system perpetuates discrimination (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Concerned scholars who subscribed to CLS were dismayed by the lack of progress made by the Civil Rights Movement (Ladson-Billings, 1999). As a result, these scholars created a new branch of legal scholarship known as CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1999), which has since been utilized as a theoretical framework in several fields, including education.

To understand CRT, the main tenets must be explored. First, CRT maintains that race is a social, historical construct, not an objective truth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Omi & Winant, 1994). Second, CRT avows that racism is an inherent fixture in American

society and American institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Third, CRT contends that African Americans have only gained rights at times when it served to meet the needs of White people (Bell, 1995; Taylor, 2009). Fourth, CRT holds that one way to counter racism is to provide alternative, or counter, narratives told or written by people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Within this study, each of these four tenets was operational.

CRT has been used as a lens to analyze numerous institutions, policies, and situations. Most relevantly, CRT has been used in the field of education to analyze textbooks (Swartz, 1992), educational policies, such as the NCLB Act (Hall & Parker, 2007), and teacher practices in the classroom (Michael-Luna, 2008). Since this study explored issues around the educational system, educational policy, and media, CRT assisted in analyzing race within these various political and social institutions.

Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the benefits derived from being a member of a group. Social capital aids in the reproduction of class and societal difference (Bourdieu, 1986). Coleman (1988) contributed a similar definition, offering social capital as the product gained by individuals through their participation in social networks. Within these networks individuals accumulate social capital through the exchange of information, development of group norms, and adherence to these norms (Coleman, 1988).

Although the term social capital was first utilized in the field of sociology (Kao, 2004; Portes, 2000), it has been imported into other fields, including education. In educational research, Coleman's definition of social capital has dominated (Portes, 1998),

creating in some ways a master narrative about social capital. This study has problematized the dominant use of Coleman's theory of social capital and attempted to offer directions for future study of social capital in communities of color as suggested by several recent scholars (Akom, 2006).

Research Design

Situated within a critical theoretical framework, this study employed methodologies that are in alignment with such a stance (Hatch, 2002). Foundationally, this study rejected positivist research methodologies, which have been viewed as injurious to people of color (Baszile, 2008), and instead embraced qualitative research methodologies due to their emphasis on storytelling, use of inductive data analysis and belief in reflexivity between researcher and participant (Hatch, 2002). This study utilized critical discourse analysis (Luke, 1995), in an effort to reveal the ways in which media have constructed a pejorative master narrative about the VHS community. Additionally, this research study used Critical Race Theory's method of counter-narratives, which encourages people of color to share their personal stories in order to understand race and racism within American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Research Approach

The first research approach, critical discourse analysis, emerged from post-structuralism and posited texts as socially constructed and socially constructing agents (Luke, 1995). As such, texts contain hidden bias that can be revealed through the use of critical analysis and protocols, such as the Discourse Historical Analysis advanced by Reisigl and Wodak (2009).

The second research approach was derived from CRT and functioned as one of its methodologies. Narratives of people of color functioned to reveal and describe historical patterns of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). They offered a way for those affected by racism to speak their own truth (Baszile, 2008) and to begin to recuperate communal memory about historical injustice (Yosso, 2006).

Research Questions

This study revealed the master narrative that exists in media accounts about VHS and exposed the interests that this master narrative protects. By unmasking the master narrative, this study created a space for members of the VHS community to narrate their personal experiences. Thus, the study answered the following three research questions:

1. What has been the master narrative of VHS portrayed through mainstream media accounts, such as newspaper articles and television news footage, during the years 1990-2010?
2. What narratives emerge when VHS students, parents, teachers, and alumni narrate their personal stories?
3. What interests does the master narrative about VHS protect?

Setting

Opened in 1924, VHS is located in the city of Los Angeles in an area known as South Central. The campus is operated by the Los Angeles Unified School District and serves students in grades 9 to 12 from the surrounding community. Due to overcrowding, in 1995 the campus was moved to a three-track, year-round schedule, which continues to operate today. Students are assigned to one of three tracks, A-track, B-track or, C-track,

and these tracks each have their own scheduled vacations. At any one time, two tracks of students attend classes, while the third track is “off track” or on vacation. LAUSD officials have signaled that VHS will cease to be a multi-track campus in 2012 when two additional high schools will open in the surrounding area.

The demographics of the VHS campus reflect the changes in the demographics of the city of Los Angeles and the community of South Central. From 1920 to 1950, the campus population and surrounding community was comprised of a majority of White students (Sides, 2003). The period of time from 1950 to 1980 saw an increase in the number of African American families living in the VHS community due to migrations from the southern United States, and as a result the campus demographics during this timeframe reflected a majority of African American students (Sides, 2003).

Due to restrictive housing covenants, this was one of the only areas in the Los Angeles where African Americans could purchase houses (Sides, 2003). Along the corridor of Central Avenue, a number of African American owned businesses sprang up, earning this area the moniker of South Central, which at the time signaled a thriving African American community (Sides, 2003). Over the years, after the Watts riots in 1965 and due to the community’s negative portrayal in movies, music, and the media, the term South Central became a pejorative term (Sides, 2003).

In the late 1980s the community of South Central experienced a large demographic shift as Latino families began moving into the community. As a result, the VHS campus from the early 1990s to the present time has shifted to serve a majority of Latino students.

Throughout the years, the VHS campus has undergone numerous changes in its academic program. In the 1970s and 1980s the campus was known for a variety of successful vocational education programs, including an award winning photography department and a licensing cosmetology program. Additionally, college opportunities were abundant during this time, as the advancement of affirmative action policies sought to increase diversity at college campuses. Budget cuts to these programs, shifts in district policy, and the imposition of state laws led to the demise of the school's vocational programs and college's affirmative action programs.

The shift to a three-track schedule in 1995 greatly impacted the campus and community as it led to increased use of dilapidated facilities, destabilized classroom spaces, and introduced scheduling challenges. In the school year 1997-1998, VHS' low performance on state standardized exams earned it the label of Program Improvement by the state of California. The installation of the NCLB Act in 2002 increased the use of standardized test scores and the publication of these scores for public scrutiny. As a result, VHS became the subject of more intense scrutiny from the local school district, state department of education, and mainstream media. In 2005, the school transitioned into wall-to-wall small learning communities in an effort to provide more personalized educational experiences to students. In December 2009, the LAUSD Superintendent announced that he would be reconstituting VHS in July 2010 under the authority of the NCLB Act.

Participants

For this research study, participants were selected using purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and a nomination process (Hatch, 2002). In total, 12 participants representing three distinct categories of members of the VHS community were selected. The three categories represented were VHS teachers, VHS alumni, and VHS community elders, an elder being defined as a person who had worked or lived in the VHS community for the entirety of the past 20 years.

In the category of VHS teacher, four participants were selected. Each teacher participant taught at the high school for at minimum 10 years during the time period of 1990-2010. Two teachers were male and two were female. Of the two male teacher participants, one was Latino and one was White. Of the two female teacher participants, one was African American and one was Latina. The age range for teacher participants was 35-65 years old.

In the category of VHS alumni, four participants were selected. Each alumni participant attended the high school during some portion of the years 1990-2010 and graduated from the high school. Two alumni were male and two were female. Of the two male alumni, one was Latino and one was African American. Of the two female alumnae, both were Latina. The age range for alumni was from 18-38 years old.

In the category of community elder, four participants were selected. A community elder was defined as an individual who has lived or worked in the community surrounding Victory High School during the entirety of the past 20 years, a period of time that encompassed the years 1990-2010. Three community elders were female and one

was male. Three community elders were White and one was African American. The age range for community elders was 50-68 years old.

Methodology

Qualitative research necessitates the need for an emergent design (Hatch, 2002), With this principal in mind, the study was organized into four stages that served as an organizing, although fluid and circular, framework for the study.

In Stage 1, I utilized the research approach of critical discourse analysis, specifically the Discourse Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) to deconstruct media accounts of the VHS community and to expose the master narrative hidden within these texts. Using the lenses of master narrative theory, CRT, and social capital theory, I analyzed these texts in order to expose the interests protected by the master narrative.

In Stage 2 of the study, based on the approach of the critical race method of counter-narratives, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants about their experiences in the VHS community. Using purposive sampling, I selected current and former teachers who worked at VHS during some portion of the years 1990-2010 to interview. These individuals nominated additional alumni and community elders to participate in this research project. All individuals had attended school, taught, and lived in the VHS community during some portion of the span of 20 years in this study, so they had numerous narratives to share about their experiences.

In Stage 3, I conducted focus group interviews with participants in an effort to engage participants in a dialogue around shared experiences in the VHS community. In addition, focus groups provided participants with an opportunity to hear narratives from

other members of the VHS community and to hear how their story, while unique, contained many themes that resonated with other fellow community members.

In Stage 4, I conducted short, unstructured follow-up interviews with participants. The goal of these final interviews was to clarify any points from individual interviews and to engage participants in member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) themes that emerged from data analysis.

Limitations

Positionality

I am a White, middle-class female who attended a private Catholic high school and who possesses two advanced degrees, a Master's degree in Education and a Master's degree in English Literature. As such, I have experienced the benefits of White privilege (McIntosh, 1990), social class privilege, and educational privilege. All of these privileges impacted this study in a variety of overt and subtle ways. For example, at times during interviews, I wondered whether I was able to understand my participants' narratives about being a person of color in the VHS community because I never had had these experiences. While my bias could not be eliminated, I endeavored to inform participants about my bias at the beginning of interviews and throughout the research process.

In addition, I informed participants of the qualifications that did assist me in conducting this study. For instance, I taught English at VHS for seven years and I was a Lead Teacher of the P3 SLC for four years. In my capacity as Lead Teacher I planned and implemented numerous events and activities, including field trips, parent events, awards assemblies and sporting events. I held numerous leadership positions in a variety

of on-campus organizations including, Local School Leadership Council, School-wide Design Team, College-going culture committee, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) advisory committee, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accreditation committee. In sum, I tried throughout my time on the campus to be an active, engaged member of the VHS campus. As a result, I was able to witness firsthand the beauty, power, and resilience of this community and its members.

Delimitations

This dissertation focused on conducting qualitative research at one particular school site, VHS in an effort to provide a multi-faceted description of this school site through the narratives of those who had experiences in that community. No attempt at generalizing the findings of this study is possible, which aligns with the intent of qualitative research. Indeed, qualitative research relies on the “particularity” (Creswell, 2009, p. 193) of the research site due to its narrow focus on specific participants in a singular setting.

Significance

Overall, this study illustrated the connection two large ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971)—schools and media—had in enacting the ideology of the state (Althusser, 1971) and perpetuating hegemony by procuring the consent of the masses (Gramsci, 1971). This study revealed the presence of a master narrative within media coverage of a working class community of color and deconstructed the interests served by that master narrative, such as globalization, neoliberalism, and perpetuation of

historical racism. As such, this study exposed hegemony and countered it through the narratives of those who suffered because of its presence.

In the context of the VHS community, this study enacted social justice by providing members of this community with an opportunity to narrate their experiences, an opportunity that had not been given to them by the media or other entities. As a result, this study lifted the yoke of oppression that had been formed by deficit-laden stereotypes and instead respected members' power to participate through counter-narratives in their own emancipation from oppression. Given this context, this study fit well within the Loyola Marymount University School of Education *Conceptual Framework* (2009), which advocates for students to not only examine how injustice perpetuates but to work to create conditions that can bring about a more fair, equitable reality for those who are marginalized or oppressed.

In a larger policy context, this study offered an opportunity to intervene in the NCLB Act discourse that had been condemning public schools, and contributing to the further oppression of low income students and families of color that lived within these communities. By relying on reductive arguments that elided the presence of racism, classism or sexism, the rhetoric around the NCLB Act had mobilized around fear, scaring individuals about their local public school and even scaring a nation into its lagging status as a super power (Granger, 2008). In many ways, the NCLB Act, and the rhetoric created by it, has served to maintain the wealth, privilege, and legacy of dominant groups while further oppressing individuals along racial, class, and gender lines. To intervene in this discourse is to begin to enact what Lipman (2009) called a "massive reconstruction and

renewal project” (p. 373) with the goal of countering deficit thinking about students of color and proposing alternative paradigms of discourse about public schools and the students and communities they serve.

In an academic context, this study contributes to scholarship about master narrative theory, CRT, and social capital theory. The application of master narrative theory to media, particularly to the topics of media and education, offers expanded, relevant possibilities for scholars who utilize this theoretical lens. Further, by combining CRT with social capital theory, this study offers a potential avenue for future scholarly research on working class communities of color, a path that combines a set of theoretical lenses to examine race and social class. Given that CRT scholars are currently grappling with how to incorporate theories of social class, this study adds to the literature about this present challenge.

Definition of Terms

Counter-narrative. Arriving from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a counter-narrative as defined by Solorzano & Yosso (2002) is “a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society” [p. 138]). There are three types of counter-narratives: autobiographical, biographical, and composite, which draw on accounts from a number of people (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). Counter-narratives function to reveal and to contest racism and White privilege because they defy the master narrative of the dominant group (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis describes a variety of multidisciplinary research practices that attempt to articulate the relationship between “language, ideology, and power” (Collins, 2004, p. xxii).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT contends that race is a social and historical construct (Omi & Winant, 1994) and that racism, which is discrimination or oppression on the basis of race, is a “pervasive and permanent part of American society” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

Discourse Historical Approach (DHA). A type of critical discourse analysis developed by Reisigl and Wodak (2009) that utilizes a six-step approach to analyze texts over the course of a particular historical period.

Dominant group. In the United States, the dominant group is White, male, Christian and heterosexual (hooks, 2003).

Globalization. Policies and laws that promoted unregulated free trade around the world so as to increase economic competition and international capital through the exploitation of cheaper laborers and resources (Lipman, 2009).

Hegemony. Gramsci (1971) posits the state, or government, has two ways to gain “consent” (p. 12) of its citizens: physical force or subtle control, known as hegemony. Hegemony occurs when a dominant group subtly controls “the general direction imposed on social life” (p. 12) and covertly convinces a subordinate group to accept its inferior status. Examples of organizations that utilize hegemony include religious organizations, schools, and media (Gramsci, 1985).

Ideological State Apparatuses. Althusser (1971) argued various state institutions or apparatuses facilitate the deployment of ideology, or “systems of representation” that construct real material conditions through “interpellation, or hailing” of subjects (p. 163). The dominant group utilizes these ideological apparatuses to maintain dominance over subordinate groups. Examples of ideological state apparatuses include religious organizations, schools, families, and media.

Mainstream media. In this study, mainstream media is defined as having private corporate ownerships that “sell a product to an audience or advertisers” and “issue stock, and generate profits or losses for their shareholders” (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003, p. 39)

Master narrative. Originating with postmodern theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984), the term master narrative can be defined as “the ‘big story’ told by the dominant group in a given society” (Thijis, 2008, p. 60). The use of a master narrative can serve to narrate the origin, identity, timeline, and social and political beliefs for a dominant group (Thijis, 2008). Master narratives can exist in many aspects of society, including science (Lyotard, 1984), religion (Lawless, 2003), higher education (Stanley, 2007), textbook publication (Aldridge, 2006), and educational discourse (Stanley, 2007).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In 2001, this Act was passed into law as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The law mandated each state to develop and implement a standardized assessment system for all public school students. States monitor schools progress

annually based on these assessment systems and schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress face a variety of escalating sanctions.

Social capital. Bourdieu (1986) theorized social capital as membership in a group that enables each member to earn a type of credit that can be leveraged to create additional resources or opportunities. The social capital generated by the group and its members enables the reproduction of the group, and in many cases, its dominance (Bourdieu, 1986; Dika & Singh, 2002). Coleman (1988) defined social capital as a resource derived from all participation in social relationships and social structures, which facilitates the shared exchange of information, the establishment of rules for behavior, and the adherence to these rules (Coleman, 1988). Among the goals of this dissertation is to understand whether Bourdieu's or Coleman's definition of social capital better describes the use and result of social capital in working class communities of color.

Trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness in qualitative data as containing four distinct categories: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In a quantitative research framework, these terms coincide respectively with the concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and research bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Organization

Chapter 1 of this dissertation has situated the background, purpose and significance of this study while also providing an overview of the theoretical framework, methodology, and limitations inherent to the study. Chapter 2 reviews literature pertinent to this study. Literature on master narratives, CRT, and social capital theory functioned as

the theoretical lenses for this study. Also, included in that chapter is a review of contextualizing literature about the media, history of the city of Los Angeles, and NCLB. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this study, including the research approach, which includes critical discourse analysis and the critical race methodology of counter-narratives. In addition, Chapter 3 outlines the specific stages of the research design, data collection, and data analysis utilized in this study. Chapter 4 articulates the key findings of this study while Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these findings and provides avenues for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This qualitative research study revealed the way in which the mainstream media has facilitated the procurement of the consent of the masses in order to maintain hegemony of the dominant class (Gramsci, 1971). This study unmasked the master narrative, or dominant story, that has appeared in the media coverage of a large urban public high school in Los Angeles, California known as Victory High School (VHS). The media coverage about the community of VHS illustrated how master narratives have served to silence individual voices and historical context in favor of amplifying negative stereotypes about urban public high school students, their families, and their community. This study attempted to disrupt the master narrative about the VHS community by allowing those who have lived, worked, and attended school in this community an opportunity to speak their story, to in effect provide an alternate or counter-narrative to the master narrative.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of relevant literature for this research study. This review begins by presenting a theoretical framework for this research study, which includes master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), Critical Race Theory, or CRT, (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988). Next, this review provides a brief history of the media's portrayal of people of color in the United States. Finally, this chapter concludes with a review of literature about the No Child Left Behind Act (2001).

Theoretical Framework

This study used a “tripartite theoretical framework” (Brown, 2004, p. 77). The first lens master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984) offered a way to view the predominant narrative, or story, that emerged over and over again in texts. For instance, master narratives can be found in a variety of texts including history textbooks (Alridge, 2006) and published journal articles (Stanley, 2007). By extension, even theories are master narratives that arise from the perpetual deployment of the same idea, a deployment that can be so strong as to elide criticism and deny counter viewpoints.

The second and third lenses of this research study arose from the challenge of adequately discussing both race and class in American society. While CRT offers a lens to view race and racism in American history and its institutions, it does not offer a way to consider class inequalities. Similarly, theories about social capital provide a lens to analyze class differences. However, critics of social capital theory have argued that its foundation and use have elided the presence of race and ignored historical racism in communities of people of color (Akom, 2006). The master narrative of social capital has not included race and has, in many ways, reinforced deficit theories about communities of color (Akom, 2006). Given that singularly neither CRT nor social capital theory adequately depict the presence of *both* race and class, this research study used both in conjunction to create a set of lenses through which to view the complex crucible of race and class in the community of VHS. In this way, this research study contributed to the discourse on the relationship between race and class in working class communities of color.

Master Narrative Theory

Origins of the concept. Lyotard (1984) was attributed with developing the term *metanarrative*, which has also been translated from the French as *grand narrative* (Stanley, 2007). For Lyotard (1984) metanarratives were large, continuous, and totalizing stories developed by institutions such as science or religion in order to explain the world (Cox & Stromquist, 1998). In Lyotard's (1984) opinion, postmodernism required a disbelief of metanarratives, particularly in science, because of the fact that they appeared as the voice of a singular narrator in a time full of plurality and polyvocality (Lyotard, 1984).

Other scholars pointed to the concept of master narrative as arising from the research of other theorists. Espino (2008) based her analysis of master narratives on Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Similarly, Thijis (2008) traced master narratives back to Claude Levi-Strauss' research on the relationship between colonizer and colonized, noting that "a master narrative is literally one governed by masters, as opposed to the histories of 'slaves,' 'savages' or 'the excluded'" (p. 65). Thijis also explored the concept of the original versus the copy in the term master narrative. He suggested that the narrative framework or pattern of a master narrative replicates, requiring subsequent narratives to emulate that original narrative framework or risk being silenced.

Definition and purpose. Developed from Lyotard (1984), the term master narrative emerged to explain a smaller scale metanarrative (Cox & Stromquist, 1998). Thijis (2008) defined master narrative as "the 'big story' told by the dominant group in a

given society” (p. 60). He argued that these master narratives serve to narrate four main facets of a group: origin, identity, timeline, and social and political beliefs.

For Stanley (2007) multiple stories combined to create one all-encompassing master narrative. These stories interconnected to support each other and appeared as a natural, uniform discursive agent. By creating a seamless “standard” (p. 15) story, the group who benefitted from the master narrative retained its power over other groups. This standard story became the “mental model” that justified the beliefs, rules, and ways of the dominant group. Master narratives formed a type of “script” (p. 15) by which to direct the action of society in ways advantageous to the dominant group (Stanley, 2007).

For Hastings (2006), master narratives were stories “written from the point of view of whomever was the dominator in the society, victors’ history, victors’ narrative, victors’ stories” (p. 23). As such, the marginalized did not contribute to the construction of this master narrative (Stanley, 2007). In fact, often the mechanisms of master narratives functioned purposely to silence individual voices and experiences (Agger, 1998) in a seemingly invisible way (Lawless, 2003). Although they passed as objective or just views of the world, in reality master narratives served to perpetuate discrimination (Stanley, 2007).

As Lawless (2003) stated, “master narratives endorse racism and sexism, homophobia and other exclusive policies” (Lawless, 2003). These discriminatory practices ensured perpetuation of one group’s dominance over another. Yet, even those who experience oppression under the master narrative’s influence could tacitly or overtly consent to its presence and perpetuation (Lawless, 2003). A master narrative’s seemingly

natural existence could be integrated into the thoughts and actions of everyone, even those who suffered because of its presence, insuring the maintenance of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). In order to dismantle a master narrative, it must first be acknowledged, then questioned, and finally challenged (Lawless, 2003).

Unmasking master narratives. Master narratives have existed in many societal institutions, including science (Lyotard, 1984), religion (Lawless, 2003), higher education (Stanley, 2007), textbook publication (Alridge, 2006), and educational discourse (Stanley, 2007). For example, the master narrative in some religious organizations has served to assert the dominance of men over women (Lawless, 2003). Moreover, in academia, the master narrative has directed the publication and value of research, slanting these rewards towards positivist, quantitative studies conducted by White men (Stanley, 2007).

The field of historical research often utilized the concept of master narrative. Van Delinder (2008) challenged the master narrative of the Civil Rights Movement by focusing on protests conducted by everyday people in border states such as Kansas and Oklahoma. He argued this master narrative reduced the complexity of the Civil Rights Movement and elided the contributions of many ordinary citizens in the fight for social justice.

Hastings (2006) revealed the master narrative of violence as one that has been utilized throughout the world by a variety of nations in the 20th century. In essence this master narrative conflated two contradictory ideas, arguing that in order to achieve peace individuals must engage in violence. Presenting violence as the only way to proceed, this

master narrative has enabled a large majority of people to accept “falsehood, oppression, injustice, and foul means” (p. 23) with the assurance that fairness and justice will result. Hastings called for a resistance of this master narrative, a turning over of it, through the narration of the stories of those most susceptible to and affected by violence.

Psychologists also have used the concept of master narrative. Thorne and McLean (2003) wrote how master narratives affect patients’ narration of their own lives. Patients might resist the master narrative, but in so doing, they therefore acknowledged the existence of the narrative in justifying their alternative position. Master narratives loomed as the standard story against which patients tell their personal life experiences.

Literary critics have employed the concept too. Morrison (1993) critiqued the American literary tradition for upholding the beliefs of White males while eliding the contributions of African Americans. She argued that American literature, and to some extent society, has always been defined and created with the African American presence in mind but has most often tried to hide this presence. In the 18th century, slave narratives exemplified this phenomenon:

But the consequence was a master narrative that spoke *for* Africans and their descendants, or *of* them... Whatever popularity the slave narratives had—and they influenced abolitionists and converted antiabolitionists—the slave’s own narrative, while freeing the narrator in many ways, did not destroy the master narrative. The master narrative could make any number of adjustments to keep itself intact (p. 50).

Similar to Stanley (2007), Morrison alluded to the idea that even when alternative stories were juxtaposed to it, the master narrative could adjust to drown out these stories and replicate its presence.

In education research, the concept of master narrative has served as a way to examine many aspects, including textbooks and classroom pedagogy. Alridge (2006) posited American history textbooks as reliant on a master narrative that glorifies the conquerors in a sanitized manner, which could result in providing students with a mundane, simplistic view of lives and events that were rich and complicated. Through an analysis of history textbooks, Alridge (2006) unmasked a 3-themed master narrative that portrayed Martin Luther King, Jr. as a “messianic” (p. 665), “moderate” (p. 673) figure, who exemplifies the entire Civil Rights movement. He argued this master narrative serves to reduce the complexity and controversy of King’s life and he urged teachers to resist “the ‘great men’ master narratives” (Alridge, 2006, p. 681) by equipping students with the skills necessary to conduct their own historical interviews and investigations.

Beyond textbooks, pedagogical practices in the classroom, such as rules, language, and teaching strategies, rely on a Eurocentric, White male “master script” that historically has alienated students of color (Swartz, 1992). Tracing the history of education for African Americans, Swartz (1992) argued that the master script about education in the United States has omitted truths about the ways in which people of African descent have been denied access to education and about the ways in which both African American and White educators have worked together to create more educational opportunities. She argued that teacher preparation programs have portrayed the history of education in alignment with normative White beliefs and in doing so continued to perpetuate discrimination against students of African descent (Swartz, 1992).

In her research on the Latino/a pipeline to higher education, Yosso (2006) used the term majoritarian stories rather than master narrative to describe the types of stories told from the perspective of the dominant group which has been comprised of heterosexual White men and women occupying the middle and upper classes. As evidence of these majoritarian stories, Yosso (2006) pointed to media which often rely upon “‘stock’ stereotypes” (p. 9) to depict people of color and to cultural deficit models which portrayed “working class people and People of Color as irresponsible and less intelligent while depicting White, middle- and upper-class people as just the opposite” (Yosso, 2006, p. 9). She also cited the dominant group’s assumption that students, regardless of race or socio-economic status, can obtain access to similar educational experiences. Under this majoritarian story, students who did not attain high levels of educational success were blamed and the communities in which they live were described as failures. To counteract these majoritarian stories, Yosso (2006) utilized the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, with an emphasis on counterstories.

Yosso’s study provided a useful model for this particular research study due to its theoretical framework and purpose. However, Yosso’s study differed from this particular research study in one key way: her use of composite narratives, which are based upon multiple interviews with several individuals and are presented as one continuous story. In this research study, biographical narratives were used. In addition, this research study utilized the terms master narrative and counter-narratives rather than the terms used by Yosso.

Future applications. Thijs (2008) acknowledged that while most historians have focused on identifying master narratives they should now focus on the narrative framework or pattern utilized within the master narrative in order to disrupt additional replications. A narrative that denies the use of the narrative framework of the master narrative can become a counter-narrative. Also, since master narratives create boundaries for storytelling, in essence delineating a “bandwidth” (p. 71) for legitimate stories, any story that exceeded this “permitted range” (p. 71) could delegitimize the master narrative and forge a new path for an alternative narrative.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Historical roots. CRT grew from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) which evolved from the writing of Gramsci (1971) as a branch of legal scholarship focused on understanding how the law and legal ideology replicate and legitimate inequalities in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1999). CLS challenged traditional legal practice and policy through its focus on individuals in specific social and cultural settings (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

In the 1970s, legal scholars and lawyers became frustrated by the slow pace of racial equality reform that followed the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In an effort to understand why racial equality had not arrived and to fight new articulations of racism that developed from the post-Civil Rights era, legal scholars and lawyers developed CRT as a lens for understanding the insidious, entrenched nature of racial discrimination in American law, government, and society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Since that time theorists and researchers have borrowed

CRT for use in other academic disciplines including the fields of sociology and education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

Foundational beliefs. At its foundation, CRT contends that race is a social and historical construct (Omi & Winant, 1994) and that racism, which is discrimination or oppression on the basis of race, is a “pervasive and permanent part of American society” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). In an effort to situate racism as a social, historical act committed by people, laws, and policies, CRT rejects ahistoricized, or non historical, representations of American society, relying instead on contextualized and historicized depictions and analyses of American society that are grounded on the lived experiences of people of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). The goal of CRT ultimately is to theorize and understand race in American society so individuals who subscribe to CRT can become activists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) who strive to eradicate racism (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

Application to education. In the context of education, CRT has functioned as a tool to reveal the hidden rules of oppression that operate to uphold the power of the dominant class, which is White, male, and upper class, in public schools (Duncan, 2005). Discourses about education have often revolved around race, which has made CRT a potential lens through which to view these mechanisms and discourses (Roithmayr, 1999). Desegregation of public schools, bilingual education and affirmative action are just a few of the issues that CRT scholars have analyzed (Roithmayr, 1999). To expose racism, CRT sought to use narratives, or stories, of people of color about their personal experiences (Duncan, 2005).

LatCrit. Building on CRT, critical race scholars of Latino descent have created a subdiscipline called LatCrit, which has the goal of extending CRT's conversations about race and racism to Chicano/as and Latino/as (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). According to LatCrit scholars, CRT focused too heavily on the Black/White binary in the United States and should develop a more expansive paradigm of racial identities, particularly at this time when the country is becoming more multiracial (Espinoza & Harris, 2000; Perea, 2000). For this reason, LatCrit scholars have begun to examine the presence of historic, institutionalized racism for individuals who claim Latino heritage in the United States. One such scholar, Haney Lopez (2000) examined the case of *Hernandez v. Texas*, in which, for the first time, the U.S. Supreme Court applied the Equal Protection Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment to Latinos. Further, LatCrit scholars have begun to explore conflict that has occurred between different groups of people of color (Espinoza & Harris, 2000).

CRT and social class. As noted by Delgado & Stefancic (2001), although some CRT scholars examined issues of discrimination in real estate and housing, CRT did not possess a complete theoretical understanding of class in either its conceptualization or its applications. However, most recently scholars have begun to focus on possible avenues for expanding CRT to include class and classism. Although the tenets of CRT situated racism as the centerpiece of American society and institutions, Darder and Torres (2004) asserted:

Hence, all forms of social inequality are defined by class relations or motivated by the persistent drive to perpetuate class inequality within the context of the capitalist state, a phenomenon perpetuated by the ongoing construction and

reconstruction of capitalist class relations. Thus, racism is operationalized through racialized class relations (p. 109).

Capitalism has functioned as a “totalizing force” (p. 106) at the center of a myriad of socially and historically discriminatory practices. Given that American society has operated as a capitalistic political economy, how can CRT and theories about class and classism coexist?

Cole (2009) argued that CRT and theories about class can co-exist and he advocated CRT should return to its foundation of CLS and consider Marx’s theory on racialization as ways to incorporate critiques of capitalism. In addition, CRT scholars should focus on the materialist viewpoint of CRT, which “focuses on material factors” (Cole, 2009) and views racism as a “means by which society allocates privilege, status and wealth” (Delgado, 2003, p. 124 as cited in Cole, 2009). This materialist side of CRT has the potential to be a large intersection between racism and classism. Additional intersections include globalization and neoliberalism, which both CRT and Marxism sought to critique and ultimately dismantle. Finally, another similarity existed with the use of narratives. Just as CRT acknowledged the importance of narratives of people of color, Marxism has held that “people of color need always to be listened to *because* they have been racialized in class societies” (Cole, 2009).

This dissertation has emerged in this moment when CRT scholars grappled with questions regarding the incorporation of Marxism and class critique into their scholarship. By utilizing CRT and the theoretical lens of social capital, this study sought to add to this conversation.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory has been an “export” from the sociology field into the educational field (Kao, 2004; Portes, 2000). As a heuristic (Portes, 1998; Shah, 2007), social capital theory has been applied to a variety of different circumstances, which has aided in understanding the beneficial attributes of relationships in effecting educational success (Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

Historical roots. The theory of social capital originated with L. Judson Hanifan in 1916, who posited in her work in rural Appalachia that contact between individuals created social capital which instantly fulfilled a human need for social contact and later advanced the community (Akom, 2006). John Dewey also used the term social capital in his writing (Farr, 2004 as cited in Field 2009). In the 1960s sociologist Jane Jacobs also used the term to discuss neighborhoods in urban areas (Field, 2009). It would take some 20 years for the term to come fully into the consciousness of social science researchers, efforts that were advanced by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988). Most recently Robert Putnam (2001) brought the term into the popular mainstream media through his book *Bowling Alone* in which he exposed how American culture has experienced a decline in social capital through limited enrollment in social clubs and activities.

Bourdieu. Ever concerned about social class and the reproduction of inequalities (Field, 2009), Bourdieu (1986) theorized social capital as membership in a group that enabled each member to earn a type of credit that could be leveraged to create additional resources or opportunities. Backed by the collective capital possessed by the group (Dika

& Singh, 2002), group membership then resulted in profits for individuals who may consciously or unconsciously pursue these benefits (Bourdieu, 1986). Either way, the social capital generated by the group and its members enabled the group to replicate and confirm its existence, and in many cases, its dominance (Bourdieu, 1986; Dika & Singh, 2002). For Bourdieu social capital relied on trade between individuals in a shared social network (Portes, 2000). In certain instances, social capital could be converted into financial capital (Dika & Singh, 2002). At all times, though, social capital relied on cultural reproduction, power in institutions, and tension between insiders and outsiders (Akom, 2006). Inclusion in a group could lead to greater networks and financial rewards, while exclusion eliminated the possibilities of these rewards and raised the possibility for alienation (Akom, 2006). Among the examples utilized by Bourdieu to illustrate his point were professional organizations and French nobility, each of which imbued their members with access to certain resources and opportunities while at the same time excluding non members from gaining that same access (Field, 2009).

Coleman. Coleman (1988) defined social capital as a resource derived from all participation in social relationships and social structures. Within networks, social capital connected individuals in the shared exchange of information, the establishment of rules for behavior, and the adherence to these rules (Coleman, 1988). He also focused on intergenerational closure, which he defined, in part, as people of similar generations sharing relationships with each other, such as parents of children from one school knowing other parents at the school (Dika & Singh, 2002). The presence of relationships instilled trust between members, which in turn created closure of the social network

(Coleman, 1988). This closure enabled group members then to create social norms for each other and to hold each other to fulfillment of these expectations (Coleman, 1988). The family unit, with its close bond between children and parents, factored largely into Coleman's (1988) conceptualization of social capital. The closure created within family units enabled parents to become more involved in and informed about their children's lives (Sandefure & Laumann, 1998).

Coleman (1998) grounded his theory of social capital in a quantitative study about one aspect of educational achievement, high school dropout rates. He determined that students living in a two-parent household with an expectation of college attendance were less likely to dropout than students living in a one parent household with no expectations for college attendance (Coleman, 1988). High mobility of families also served as a factor in reducing students' chances of creating and sustaining social capital and therefore remaining in high school to graduate (Coleman, 1988). Catholic schools in Coleman's study also mitigate the dropout rate due to the link to attending religious services and high degree of social capital at these smaller schools (Coleman, 1988). Coleman posited social capital as "instrumental" in high school retention, college enrollment, and overall educational achievement (Dika & Singh, 2002). As a result, Coleman's definition has dominated research in this area (Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

Application to education. Before 1990, the Social Science Citation Index did not have any articles about social capital (Field, 2009). Social capital research grew from 18 articles in the ERIC database in the period of 1986 to 1990 to 166 articles in the ERIC database in the period of 1996 to 2001 (Dika & Singh, 2002). In this latter period, social

capital research focused on minority populations' attainment and deployment of social capital (Dika & Singh, 2002). The majority of studies relied on traditional achievement measures, such as grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores, to capture student academic success (Dika & Singh, 2002). This period also relied heavily on Coleman's theory of social capital and regression analysis (Dika & Singh, 2002).

The period of 1999 to 2001 saw the emergence of qualitative research about social capital accumulation, but still relied on Coleman's markers of social capital and traditional markers of educational achievement (Dika & Singh, 2002). Of note, this period saw an emergence of studies that investigated students' educational aspirations, such as motivation, attendance, and effort (Dika & Singh, 2002). In 2006, the Social Science Citation Index listed 429 articles with references to social capital (Field, 2009).

Of the articles reviewed by Dika and Singh (2002) in the period of 1986 to 2001, at least 13 articles researched the link between social capital and educational achievement. The majority of these articles asserted positive correlations between social capital and success in school. High school dropout rates were lower and college attendance was higher for students who lived in traditional, two parent families (Dika & Singh, 2002). Overall, these studies found that students were more successful in school if they had a strong relationship with their parent, participated in church activities, experienced parent involvement at their school, and intergenerational closure, which resulted in strong relationships among parents (Dika & Singh, 2002). Moving to a new community negatively affected social capital and, as one study showed, student achievement (Dika & Singh, 2002).

Of the period examined by Dika and Singh (2002), all nine studies on educational achievement utilized the same data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study and expressed a positive correlation between social capital and achievement on tests, while expressing a negative correlation between size, mobility, and structure of families on student achievement (Dika & Singh, 2002). Parent involvement in a child's life, particularly as related to conversations, monitoring, and expectations, exhibited positive correlations on student success on standardized assessment measures (Dika & Singh, 2002). Grades and grade point averages were used as markers of educational achievement in eight of the studies (Dika & Singh, 2002). Student grades improved with parent involvement but declined with family size, moving, and nontraditional family structure (Dika & Singh, 2002).

Students gained access to social capital through family, school, and other community engagement (Beaulieu, Israel, Hartless, & Dyk, 2001). A student who was "embedded" in an environment with high social capital performed better in school (Beaulieu, et al., 2001). Even at an early age, such as kindergarten, students could benefit from greater reserves of social capital (Schlee, Mullis, & Shriner, 2009). Some aspects of social capital predicted educational success, particularly for families with high socioeconomic status, but for families with low socioeconomic status student performance can be hindered (John, 2005).

Based on these studies, then, researchers have advanced the idea that schools served as sites of exchange of social capital (Arriaza, 2003). The social networks and communication that occur throughout schools, from the formal spaces such as

classrooms, to the informal ones such as the cafeteria at lunch, either fostered or impeded the exchange of social capital (Arriaza, 2003). Which structures in school sites supported, or for that matter, hindered students' building of social capital (Noguera, 2004b, 2009)?

Hemmings (2007) delineated two types of school resources that helped to create social capital: educational, produced through actions and resources related to instruction, and auxiliary, produced through actions and resources related to psychosocial needs. Sandefure & Laumann (1998) emphasized that schools created a system of norms that directed students' behaviors and attitudes toward teachers. Arriaza (2003) pointed to teachers' responsibility to foster a caring environment based on "high expectations" (p. 73).

According to Stanton-Salazar (1997), teachers and counselors often functioned as institutional agents who provided support to students by increasing stores of knowledge; advocating for students; acting as role models; and functioning as "human bridges" to help students gain entry to "social networks... and to 'mainstream' institutions (p. 6)." Alternatively, these institutional agents also acted as "gatekeepers" (p. 6), capable of hindering access for minority youth to access larger reserves of social capital which led to greater educational success (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Problematically, though, schools were organized to socialize students according to dominant group ideology and norms (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). How can students and families of color, who are often marginalized by institutions established and maintained by the dominant group, develop trust in schools and the institutional agents who work

within them (Stanton-Salazar, 1997)? What must these schools and institutional agents do to earn the trust of the families and communities of color in which they exist?

Researchers pointed to the need for schools and institutional agents, such as counselors and teachers, to develop relationships with students and their families in order to begin to build and grow trust. For example, Hemmings (2007) indicated schools can facilitate social capital by listening to and meeting the needs of the families they serve. In one instance, a high school in a working class community of color employed advocates who had similar backgrounds to the students and were college educated professionals (Hemmings, 2007). These advocates assisted students by helping them to obtain jobs, enroll in college, and negotiate relationships at their job site or college (Hemmings, 2007). In sum, the relationships advocates forged with students facilitated the growth of students' and the community's social capital (Hemmings, 2007).

Continuing, Noguera (2009) argued all relationships in school sites matter. He pointed out how higher income communities were able to leverage larger amounts of financial capital, human capital, and social capital to insure the success of members (Noguera, 2004a). However, low-income communities, with limited financial and human capital, did not have immediate access to powerful organizations or networks, and so social capital in these areas should be considered in a more nuanced manner (Noguera, 2004a). Noguera (2004a) defined two aspects of social capital, "bridging," which connected individuals to social institutions, and "bonding," which cohered individuals around a shared goal of organizing for social change (p. 2156). The latter aspect of social capital has been difficult for low-income communities to sustain, particularly in regards

to efforts to reform institutions (Noguera, 2004a). Social capital could be eroded when institutions, such as schools, were unresponsive to community members' reform efforts (Noguera, 2004a).

Immigrants and social capital. More recently, researchers have explored gaps in social capital theory pertaining to immigrants (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Research has found that White students and students who were third generation had higher levels of social capital and therefore performed better in school (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). New immigrant groups were cut off from mainstream American culture, and as a result had to create networks that were tightly knit with shared expectations and obligations among individuals (Kao, 2004; Shah, 2007). For minorities, information, especially about services and institutions, has been a powerful entity that they cannot access due to language barriers or other circumstances (Kao, 2004).

Bankston (2004) explored the way in which the host country exerted pressure that shaped the responses of immigrants. For example, in the Vietnamese American community, their experience of social capital has been shaped by a history of exile, war, and discrimination (Bankston, 2004), which has produced pressure on children to replicate home country attitudes towards adults in the host country of the United States (Bankston, 2004). This led to higher performance in school but came at a cost of children's mental health (Bankston, 2004).

While tight closure in ethnic groups protects members, particularly children, it also obfuscated the power dynamics within ethnic communities and within American society as a whole (Shah, 2007). As an example, Shah (2007) illustrated how Laotian

youth in the United States sometimes engage in risky behavior such as teenage pregnancy or dropping out of school despite the presence of a great deal of social capital in a tight ethnic enclave (Shah, 2007).

Coleman (1988) claimed higher social capital yielded higher performance in school and some research has supported that hypothesis, but not all research has shown this (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). The variety of ways that researchers have defined educational achievement may have something to do with differences in findings (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Using a linear regression model, researchers found that parent involvement at school and closure between parents and children resulted in higher grade point averages (GPA) and standardized test scores in the eighth grade (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Yet, these researchers determined that socioeconomic status (SES), as identified by family income, was a strong predictor of student performance (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Differences in student performance for differing generations of student immigrants, generational closure and parental involvement positively correlated to higher performance in school (Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

Limitations of application. Gaps in conceptualization and methodology hindered the creation of a clear definition and deployment of social capital theory (Dika & Singh, 2002). Many have described the definition of social capital theory as “murky” (Kao, 2004) or “fuzzy” (Dika & Singh, 2002). At times, Portes (2000) explained that social capital has been conflated with cultural capital. Additionally, circular logic occurs frequently, as researchers often confused social capital’s sources with its benefits (Dika & Singh, 2002; Portes, 2000). Is it the ability to “access” social capital or the “ability” to

activate social capital that is most important (Dika & Singh, 2002)? Either way, this confusion often produced logic errors (Portes, 2000). Further complicating the matter was the fact that educational achievement, in and of itself, has been difficult to define (John, 2005). Most often, researchers relied on traditional indicators such as GPA and test scores, which may or may not have been most often affected by social capital.

As a tool in empirical study, social capital theory has not been as strong as it could be (Dika & Singh, 2002). Methodologically, social capital research relied on the National Educational Longitudinal Study data set, which was never intended for this purpose (Dika & Singh, 2002). Additionally, researchers have depended upon regression-based models, which when connected to errors in social capital theory's sources and benefits enabled researchers to find results that they intended all along (Dika & Singh, 2002).

Traditionally, social capital was defined by middle-class forms of social networking and support (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Social capital was problematic for minority youth due to mobility, social barriers, and the involvement of institutional agents that often limit selection to courses or programs, and foster distrust of institutions (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). More seriously, research in social capital theory was blamed for manifesting a “‘deficit theory syndrome,’ yet another ‘thing’ or ‘resource’ that unsuccessful individuals, families, communities, and neighbourhoods [sic] lack” (Morrow, 1999, p. 760 as cited in Dika & Singh 2002). As Akom (2006) stated, the current state of social capital theory upheld “the culture of poverty thesis” (p. 83) by maintaining stereotypes about the African American experience. Social capital theory further laid blame on

communities of color (Akorn, 2006) by continuing to elide race (Akorn, 2006), gender (Field, 2009), and the intersections of these with class (Shah, 2007).

Future research. Future research should more precisely, clearly and rigorously define and deploy social capital theory (Kao, 2004; Portes, 2000). Although Bourdieu's theory was more fleshed out theoretically, Coleman's theory has been used most often (Portes, 1998). Future research might need to be more critical of Coleman's theory, particularly in understanding how social capital did not assist all students in the same ways of being successful in school and in fact for some students worked against their achievement in school (Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

Underneath social capital theory has been the belief that America is a meritocratic society that fairly treats all individuals (Shah, 2007). Those who use the term must grapple with these underlying currents and continue to reveal the positive outcomes, while also evaluating the "costs and sacrifices" that arise with the production of social capital (Bankston, 2004). There could be negative aspects to social capital which can lead to the exclusion of people from groups, loss of freedom for members, and norms that propel individuals downward rather than upward (Portes, 1998). These aspects were exemplified in the mafia (John, 2005) and urban gangs (Field, 2009), groups that have not been studied for the presence of social capital. Indeed, a new model of all aspects of social capital that include a deep understanding of race, identity, history, and power might be necessary for this theory to evolve (Akorn, 2006).

Media and Communities of Color

Wilson, Gutierrez and Chao (2003) explained that the media have served five basic functions in United States society. The first, surveillance, posited the media as acting as the guard against threats to society and alerting individuals to these threats. In the second, media played the role of correlating events in society, providing interpretation and links so that individuals have a framework for understanding the world around them. Third, media have transmitted values and beliefs to society in an effort to normalize behaviors and attitudes of individuals. Fourth, media have entertained its audience, and fifth, media have operated as economic businesses in the capitalist society, producing and selling goods in order to benefit shareholders.

Brief History of Media in the United States

Throughout United States history media have been used to stereotype people of color (Wilson et al., 2003). In the early history of the United States, popular literature served as the vehicle throughout which to deploy pejorative stereotypes about Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. For example, in the 1800s, popular novels written by Bret Harte and Mark Twain portrayed Native American as savage and treacherous, stereotypes that assisted in justifying the genocide of Native American people and the taking of their land (Wilson et al., 2003).

The advent of movies and television enabled the stereotypes of minority groups to be shown through pictures and sound in addition to print mediums. Movies such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Typhoon* (1914), and *The Greaser's Revenge* (1914) utilized cruel stereotypes of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos in an effort to advance

the superiority of White people by portraying people of color as inferior either intellectually or morally (Wilson et al., 2003). Television portrayals of people of color differed little from those of movies, particularly from the 1950s to 1980s, as shows often featured casts of White actors, with generally few to no people of color (Wilson et al., 2003). For the most part, this pattern has continued today, although some exceptions of television shows based on an entire cast of people of color, such as *The Bill Cosby Show*, do exist (Wilson et al., 2003).

More recently, the rise of video game use has led to an analysis of the use of stereotypes in this genre of media, an analysis that found strong use of racialized stereotypes to portray people of color (Wilson et al., 2003). The more ubiquitous use of the Internet also has offered another medium through which to spread a variety of discourse about people of color, including racialized stereotypes as well as resistance messages, a phenomenon that warrants continued study (Wilson et al., 2003)

News Media

Literature, movies, television and video games often have fallen into the entertainment function of media, and as such, were often viewed as fictional (Wilson et al., 2003). However, news, either in print or television, often was perceived as reality in people's minds, making the use of stereotypes in this genre of media worthy of increased scrutiny (Wilson et al., 2003).

After racial unrest spread across the United States in 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson convened a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). Headed by Governor Otto Kerner, Jr. of

Illinois, the commission, which was nicknamed the Kerner Commission conducted a study about the racial unrest and issued a report of its findings (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968).

Among the findings of the report were that newspaper, radio, and television news did not provide adequate coverage about the causes of the unrest. Among the report's recommendations was for news organizations to expand coverage of African American communities and the challenges they face by assigning journalists to these communities; to recruit more African American into the field of journalism; to train journalists to cover issues surrounding race; and to improve efforts to report news more accurately and responsibly (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). The report found that journalists "write and report from the standpoint of a white man's world" and that the field of journalism needed to take steps to change this (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). This report was cited as beginning a conversation about the way newspapers, television and radio cover communities of color, but it also was cited as not going far enough quickly enough and for not being successful in changing the way journalists cover communities of color (Martindale, 1990).

The Kerner report called for changes in the way news organizations cover communities of color and many researchers have chosen to study whether or not the report's call has been answered. News organizations have functioned to make decisions about what events to cover and often have provided analysis to interpret events (Wilson et al., 2003). The journalists and managers who determine what constitutes news should be viewed as "gatekeepers" of information, for they decide what readers and viewers read

or watch (Wilson et al., 2003). Historically, these gatekeeping positions have been held by Whites (Wilson et al., 2003).

Although it seems unimportant, the actual amount of times news media portrayed people of color impacted individuals' views about race (Wilson et al., 2003). To date, Martindale's (1990) study of four newspapers over the years 1950 to 1989 was cited as one of the most important longitudinal studies of newspaper coverage of African Americans. The findings of this study indicated an increased amount of newspaper column inches was given to covering African Americans (Martindale, 1990). In the newspaper with the highest amount, though, the coverage amounted to less than 5% of the total available space in the newspaper (Martindale, 1990).

During the time period under study, Martindale (1990) found an increase in coverage of everyday activities of African Americans, an increase in coverage of African American politicians, and an increase in coverage of African Americans in the arts. Coverage of Civil Rights related events and issues decreased during the time period, after reaching its peak in the 1960s (Martindale, 1990). Coverage of problems affecting African American communities, which was a focus of the Civil Rights movement, increased minimally from 2% to 13% (Martindale, 1990). The study also pointed to an increase in two newspapers of coverage considered stereotypical (Martindale, 1990). Overall, the study concluded with mixed results, as some positive changes in coverage of African Americans, including greater attention to everyday activities, occurred but improvements were suggested, particularly in increasing coverage about the problems African Americans face (Martindale, 1990).

Ban and Adams (1997) did a study about the *Los Angeles Times*' coverage of Korean Americans after the riots in 1992. They found the newspaper published more articles normalizing Korean Americans by portraying them as every day individuals who care about their families and want to succeed in the United States. Although the newspaper offered a wider variety of articles about Korean Americans, the overall difference between the amount of articles that portrayed Korean Americans favorably was not significant (Ban & Adams, 1992). Among the factors attributed to this change in news coverage were pressure from the Korean American community and other communities of color and increased economic clout of the Korean American community.

In terms of television news, many researchers have explored how communities of color are portrayed. Entman (1992) posited news coverage utilized schema, which are similar to stereotypes, and connect to audience member's preexisting ideology. As a result, television news drew upon this schema in order to portray African Americans as menacing criminals and as emotionally charged when advocating for their own political interests.

Poindexter, Smith, and Heider (2003) argued more Americans watch local television news as their primary news source and for this reason the way this news source portrayed people of color greatly mattered. Their findings asserted that viewers of local television news would not see people of color as anchors, reporters, subject or sources (Poindexter et al., 2003). No stories about discrimination faced by people of color were offered and African Americans were most likely to be on the news because they had committed a crime.

Among the other recommendations of the Kerner Report was for news organizations to increase their hiring of people of color. From 1990 to 2005, the overall population of people of color in the United States increased 7.3%, but the number of people of color working in television news increased only 3.4% (Papper, 2005). During that time, the percentage of people of color in television news remained fairly steady at about 20% each year (Papper, 2005). Radio news saw the largest spike in the number of people of color working in 1995 at 14.7%, but since that time the percentage has decreased reaching a low of 7.9% in 2005 (Papper, 2005). Management in television and radio news continued to be dominated by Whites (Papper, 2005). About 88% of news directors in both television and radio were White, while over 93% of general managers in television and over 96% of general managers in radio were White (Papper, 2005). In 2010, the most recent report about the workforce of television and radio news cited another decline in the number of journalists of color, but an increase in the number of news directors of color in television and radio news (Papper, 2010).

Corporatization of Media

Through increased private corporate ownership and conglomeration, media have aligned with numerous interests in the nation's economic system (Wilson et al., 2003). For example, the *Los Angeles Times*, which was owned by the Chandler family for decades, was sold to the Tribune Company, a privately operated corporation that owned and operated a number of other newspapers and television stations (Wilson et al., 2003). Media ownership has concentrated into the hands of a few corporations, "all positioning themselves to be more profitable by creating, buying, selling, and distributing news,

entertainment and information” (Wilson et al., 2003, p. 40). As a result, a fifth function of media has become more important than ever, economic service (Wilson et al., 2003). In this study, then, the use of the term mainstream media referred to this new function of media, which was meant to sell a media product to a large audience in an effort to increase the profits of shareholders (Wilson et al., 2003).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Passed as a bipartisan piece of legislation, the NCLB Act received praise from a variety of conservative and liberal politicians, organizations, and private sector businesses, uniting this diverse group in a unified cause to close the achievement gap for students of color (Granger, 2008). At the time of publication, it is still operational.

NCLB, as it came to be called, was a broad sweeping piece of legislation that had several requirements for states to implement in regards to education. Among the requirements were that all states ensured that teachers were “highly qualified” to teach in the subject and classroom to which they were assigned (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). States also created and implemented standardized tests that measured the proficiency of all students, including English Language Learners, socioeconomic level, special education, and ethnicity (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). With this data, states needed to prepare an action plan for ensuring that all students, regardless of designation, would be proficient on the standardized tests by the year 2014 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

To achieve this timeline, school districts and schools were given annual targets for increases in test score in order to illustrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward the goal of having all students proficient by the year 2014 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). School districts and schools that met their AYP had the opportunity to earn financial rewards and public recognition, while those that failed to meet their AYP faced a series of escalating consequences over the course of five years (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). These consequences included being put on notice for not achieving AYP, offering students the option to transfer to a more successful school, paying for tutoring for low-achieving students, and other “corrective action” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). If a school failed to make AYP after five years, the school could be restructured, an option that included conversion to charter school, state takeover, or even replacement of all staff (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

At the outset of the law’s implementation, it became clear that the goal of having all students achieve proficiency on standardized tests by the year 2014 would be difficult to reach (Ravitch, 2010). In 2007, 25,000 schools across the country did not achieve their AYP (Ravitch, 2010). In 2008, that number grew to 30,000 schools across the country. In fact, every year the number of schools failing to make AYP has grown (Ravitch, 2010). As a consequence of failing to meet AYP after several years, in 2007 over 3,500 public schools, an increase of over half from the year before, faced either the consequence of implementing an improvement plan or implementing a restructuring plan (Ravitch, 2010). This number of schools undergoing plans or implementation of restructuring has grown

steadily year after year, a prospect that many cite as possibly foreboding the end of public education altogether (Ravitch, 2010).

Results of NCLB

The results of the law have been hotly debated. Within NCLB, an emphasis on positivist research methodologies existed and naturally research about NCLB's effectiveness has relied on quantitative research methodologies (Hursh, 2007). In 2003 in California, 36.5% of students attained proficient status on English Language Arts exams, while 38.8% of students achieved proficient status on Mathematics exams (Causey-Bush, 2005). These data were consistent with findings on the National Assessment Education Progress, which has been administered since 1990 in mathematics and since 1992 in reading to fourth and eighth graders throughout the United States (Causey-Bush, 2005). Research indicated that the achievement gap between students of color, the expressly stated goal of NCLB, has remained steady and in some cases increased after the passage and implementation of the law (Ravitch, 2010). Little to no gains on reducing the achievement gap were made on national standardized tests (Ravitch, 2010).

Among the complaints about NCLB were that it was not fully funded by the federal government and that state governments became burdened with increased education expenditures in order to meet the law's guidelines (Ravitch, 2010). For example, the cost for creating and implementing standardized testing programs cost a state from "\$1.9 billion to \$7 billion" (Goertz, 2005). Between the years 2002 and 2007, the federal government allocated only \$2.34 billion, enough for only one state, to assist all states in paying for these testing programs (Goertz, 2005). Since states created their

own education standards and standardized tests, some established more rigorous standards, while others utilized less rigorous standards in order to attain higher results on standardized tests (Ravitch, 2010).

Additionally, critics cited the failure of the law to propel students to switch to more successful schools. In California, of the total population of students eligible to transfer to more successful schools, less than 1% did so, a fact that was repeated in states across the country (Ravitch, 2010). The reasons cited for this failure of the law were the fact that successful schools were often full and unable to admit new students and parents preferred their local school to sending their students across the city on buses (Ravitch, 2010).

More seriously, NCLB was cited as a reason for a narrowing of the instructional curriculum and teaching practices that focused only on passage of standardized tests, both possible causes in diminishing student interest in school and pushing students to dropout of school (Hursh, 2007). Critics pointed to statistics about dropout rates since the institution of NCLB. In 1996, English language learners earned the most high school diplomas of any minority group, but in 2002 this group of students fell to last, meaning they had the highest high school dropout rate of any sub-population (Hursh, 2007). Dropout rates for students with disabilities have also increased since the enactment of NCLB (Hursh, 2007).

While much has been written about the results of the NCLB Act, little research has focused on the mainstream media's role in disseminating information and images of low performing public schools and therefore assisting in swaying public opinion against

public schools and towards privatization. Granger (2008) argued NCLB was a “deeply-politicized” (Granger, 2008) measure that utilized a variety of media to disseminate negative information about public education in an order to advance privatization efforts of the public school system (Kohn, 2004; Lipman, 2009). NCLB continued and, in some ways, intensified the “manufactured crisis” about public education in the United States (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Granger, 2008). In addition, it shifted blame away from many of the historical and systemic problems that impacted students of color and their families, such as poverty, unemployment, health care, and housing (Hursh, 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study utilized the theoretical frameworks of master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Coleman, 1988) in an effort to reveal the master narrative in the media’s coverage of the VHS community, a working class community of color located in South Central, an area that has undergone numerous changes throughout the years. Since this study revolved around a working class community of color, an understanding of how news media have portrayed people of color helped to frame the study. Additionally, the increased media attention public schools garnered under the NCLB Act (2001), intensified reform efforts, which greatly impacted the VHS community.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Master narratives have functioned as big stories (Thijis, 2008) that narrate the history and beliefs of a dominant group. These big stories act to frame the experiences of a group of people in a way that appear universal, as if all experiences within that group were the same. In this way, master narratives have controlled the discursive space around a particular topic, silencing individual voices that might offer an alternative point of view. To counter this totalizing force of master narratives, space must be opened to permit those individual voices to speak their particular point of view.

In this study, I attempted to do this, to provide a space for alumni, teachers, and community elders to portray their experiences outside of the oppressive space of a master narrative about Victory High School (VHS) as a “failing” school and community. Although conscious of the need for this study to have a fluid, emergent design so as to not reinscribe a positivist master narrative (Stanley, 2007), I nonetheless conceptualized this qualitative critical research study in four stages (Hatch, 2002). In the first stage, I utilized the method of critical discourse analysis to unmask the media’s master narrative about VHS. Using a “tripartite theoretical framework” (Brown, 2004) consisting of master narrative theory, Critical Race Theory, and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), I critically examined the interests protected by this master narrative.

Once the master narrative was exposed and challenged, space to articulate individual experiences could be opened (Lawless, 2003). In the second stage of the study,

I drew on the critical race methodology of counter-narratives to conduct in-depth individual interviews with teachers who have taught at VHS, alumni who attended school at VHS, and community elders who had decades of experience teaching in the community. All participants had the opportunity to narrate their own story, free from the constraining boundaries of the media's master narrative and aware of the power of their narrative to transform the discourse surrounding VHS.

Recognizing the transformative power of these narratives, the third stage of the study involved uniting participants in small, intimate focus groups, where each participant had the opportunity to share his/her personal narrative and to listen to other participants' narratives. For participants, focus group interviews deepened the narration of these stories, built bridges across stories, and validated their experiences. In this way, participants and I engaged in a recursive process of meaning making, a process that ideally was productive for everyone involved.

In the final phase of the study, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants. The purpose was to clarify information provided in individual interviews and to share themes that emerged from interviews in order to member check, or receive feedback from participants about the trustworthiness of these emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Informal member checks also occurred in the form of furnishing participants with copies of transcripts from interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the study, I utilized a reflexive journal and drew upon a peer debriefer to assist in documenting the data collection and analysis processes, any biases that arose, and emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks, the use of a reflexive journal, and the participation of a

peer debriefer all assisted in increasing the trustworthiness of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This chapter serves to describe in more detail the methodology for this study. The chapter begins with a presentation of the research questions and research approach, which as mentioned above, includes critical discourse analysis and the critical race methodology of counter-narratives. Next, I discuss the research design and procedures as conceptualized in the four stages of the study. A description of the setting, participants, and participant selection process follows and the chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical concerns, including institutional review board procedures, positionality, and gaining access.

Research Questions

This study answered the following research questions:

1. What has been the master narrative of VHS portrayed through mainstream media accounts, such as newspaper articles and television news footage, during the years 1990-2010?
2. What narratives emerge when VHS teachers, alumni, and community elders narrate their personal stories?
3. What interests does the master narrative about VHS protect?

Research Approach

For this study, I utilized two main research approaches: critical discourse analysis and counter-narratives. Similar to master narrative theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT), critical discourse analysis arose from neo-Marxism, feminism, and post

structuralism, particularly the theories of Michel Foucault. Critical discourse analysis posited texts as socially constructed and socially constructing agents, and as a result, advocated texts be critically examined in order to challenge belief systems, such as racism and classism, that uphold the dominant group (Luke, 1995).

The second research approach derived from CRT, and relied on the premises that race is a social construction and that racism is embedded in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In order to combat racism, CRT advocated the use of counter-narratives of people of color to bring to the foreground unconscious discrimination and to present an alternative experience that contradicts dominant discourses, such as meritocracy, equality, and fairness (Yosso, 2006).

Critical Discourse Analysis

To expose the master narrative about VHS, I began with a large-scale search of archives in an effort to locate as many mainstream media texts about VHS as possible. Next, I utilized the methodology of critical discourse analysis (Luke, 1995), specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), to analyze these texts and the interests they protect.

Historical roots. Luke (1995) attributed critical discourse analysis's theoretical underpinnings to post structuralism, neo-Marxism, feminism, and critical linguistics. He cited three movements that have brought critical discourse analysis to the present moment, including psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and post structural theory of Foucault, who contributed the shift to the belief that "texts are constructive of social formations, communities, and individuals' social identities" (Luke, 1995, p. 9). Rogers

(2004) and van Dijk (2008) cited the Frankfurt School as providing the theoretical underpinnings for the term “critical” in critical discourse analysis. Additional theorists who have influenced the development of critical discourse analysis include Gramsci (1971) and Althusser (1971) whom Fairclough and Wodak (1997) pointed to for providing important insight about hegemony and ideology respectively.

Definition and purpose. Signaled by upper case letters, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was a program of study designed by Fairclough (1992) that utilized a specific three-pronged approach, which included analyzing units of text, interpreting discourse events, and contextualizing these events within a social practice (Collins, 2004). In lower case letters, critical discourse analysis described a variety of multidisciplinary research practices that attempt to articulate the relationship between “language, ideology, and power” (Collins, 2004, p. xxii). Throughout this study, I utilized the lower case term and its corresponding definition.

Luke (1995) demonstrated that critical discourse analysis arose from the belief discourse is hegemonic and its main goal is to “naturalize its own functions through its appearance in everyday texts” (p. 20). Critical discourse analysis disrupted discourse’s hegemony by denying texts as “common sense” (p. 20) and instead viewing texts as constructed in a specific social and historical moment by an individual with real bias. Fundamentally, the goal of critical discourse analysis was to make the “implicit explicit” (Stack, 2006, p. 52) by revealing ideology hidden inside texts and illustrating how texts shape reality and manipulate readers (Luke, 1995).

In addition, critical discourse analysis has the ability to reveal the “power relations” (Luke, 1995, p. 40) at play in texts. To do this, critical discourse analysis can explore “the contours and gaps, the nodal points and silences” (Luke, 1995, p. 37) that occur in larger discourses. These gaps were often what Luke (1995) termed “[m]inority discourses” (p. 39) that articulate the experiences of “particular marginal groups in their subjugation and opposition to the dominant culture” (p. 39).

Luke (1995) argued “texts and images are the new battlegrounds for a politics of representation” especially with the growth of “ubiquitous” technology in the 21st century (p. 5). Regularly individuals have engaged in critical discourse analysis when they question texts around them, such as advertisements, letters, books or newspaper accounts (Luke, 1995). In education, critical discourse analysis has examined textbooks, primary source documents, or even transcripts of classroom discussions (Luke, 1995). It provided “tools” to reveal how “texts represent the social and natural world in particular interests and how texts position them and generate the very relations of institutional power at work in classrooms, staff rooms, and policy” (p. 12 -13).

As discussed in Rogers (2004) and van Dijk (2008), Fairclough and Wodak (1997) conceptualized eight core beliefs for critical discourse analysis:

1. Critical discourse analysis addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.

6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Critical discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Critical discourse analysis is a form of social action (Rogers, 2004, p. 2; van Dijk, 2008, p. 86).

Among the eight core beliefs, numbers 4, 7, and 10 were most relevant to this study. The belief that discourse not only contains ideology but also assists in the spread of ideology is consistent with Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1971), whose thinking has helped to frame this study. The use of critical discourse analysis within this study was meant to explain and interpret the underlying ideology present in the media coverage of VHS in order to disrupt deficit-based discourse and instead to supplant this discourse with images of the rich deposits of social capital that exist with the VHS community. As such, this study operated within the realm of seeking to enact social change, which is consistent with the principles of critical discourse analysis.

Applications of critical discourse analysis. Rogers (2004) introduced the idea that approaches to conducting a critical discourse analysis have varied, an idea that is echoed by van Dijk (2008) who advanced that critical discourse analysis had no set pattern for analysis because discourses did not always have set patterns of creation or existence. According to Rogers (2004), approaches to critical discourse analysis could be very focused on the linguistic aspects of a text or more focused on the context of the text.

Wodak and Meyer (2009) identified six different ways of conducting critical discourse analysis, each of which is grounded in a different theoretical framework. Most relevant to this research study was the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed

by Reisigl and Wodak (2009). Theoretically, DHA aligned itself to Critical Theory (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), specifically through connections to the Frankfurt School (Forchtner, 2011).

As its name alludes, DHA offered a methodology for examining discourse over a historical time period, which facilitated the illustration of “new ‘sanitized’ narratives which cover up ruptures, war crimes and conflicts which have occurred in the past” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 19). Like other types of critical discourse analysis, DHA was problem-oriented, but unlike other types of critical discourse analysis, DHA sought to evaluate changes in discourse over a long period of time, encouraged the use of fieldwork to assist in understanding the subject under study, and desired for results to be made public via both scholarly journals and more publicly accessible mediums, such as through newspapers and Internet websites (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Media have served as a common source of texts for researchers to explore with the methodology of critical discourse analysis. For example, Fairclough (1992) used critical discourse analysis to evaluate newspaper articles from national British newspapers. Through his analysis, he discovered the tendency for the reporter to adopt the role of mediator, translating the news into language that was easier for the audience to understand (Fairclough, 1992). Another tendency he identified was for newspaper articles to appear to be “a matter of statements, claims, beliefs, positions—rather than feelings, circumstances, qualities of social and interpersonal relationships, and so forth” (p. 64). The desire to remain objective, to deny aspects that might be taken as subjective, such as

relationships and feelings, enabled those who produced newspaper articles to obfuscate personal or social bias and instead to render their text as providing self-evident meaning.

van Dijk (2008) offered that newspaper articles often follow a “conventional schematic structure consisting of such categories as summary (headline + lead), main events, background (previous events, context, history), comments and evaluation” (p. 111-112). In a study of 1,500 headlines regarding people of color in Dutch newspapers, not one appeared as “positive” when a person of color was presented as the “active, responsible agent” (van Dijk, 2008, p. 112). An analysis of topics of newspaper reports about people of color featured several recurrent topics, including “crime, cultural differences, violence (‘riots’), social welfare and problematic immigration” (van Dijk, 2008, p. 135). Additionally, sources in these newspaper reports were never people of color, but rather most often White males (van Dijk, 2008). Although van Dijk’s (2008) study occurred outside of the United States, it nonetheless illustrated how newspapers could restrict the use and appearance of the voices of people of color in favor of amplifying the voices of those who occupy the dominant group.

Stack (2006) conducted a critical discourse analysis of Canadian newspaper articles and government press releases regarding the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Media, she argued, have served a key role in informing policymakers about the quality of schools, but research about the influence the media have in affecting policy decisions has only begun. Using a thematic analysis, Stack exposed the central themes of the importance of the PISA results, Canada’s relative success on the exam, and the presence of regional differences in PISA results. She noted

the test was not given to students who lived on First Nation reserves and questioned whether the inclusion of Aboriginal students in the new reports would counter narrate the successful discourse that emerged around Canada's PISA results.

Stack (2007) extended her analysis of the reports of the PISA results to the United States. She explored the use of statistics as seemingly objective reporting of reality and the way that media have utilized press releases, at times verbatim, to present news. Traditionally, news stories have begun with the current situation and then offered historical information, relying on literary characteristics, such as plot and character, to narrate current events (Stack, 2007). In her analysis, Stack (2007) identified two main narratives: a) schools have a role to play in strengthening the economy and b) schools would improve if teachers worked harder. These two narratives were foregrounded against a backdrop of "the grand narrative of the American meritocracy" (Stack, 2007, p. 107), which focused on students' ability to use education to become successful and elided mention of educational inequalities, particularly for poor students of color.

Limitations and future recommendations. Rogers (2004) outlined a number of critiques that have been leveled at critical discourse analysis. Among the critiques were the suppositions that researchers "project" a political agenda onto the text and that they remove texts from their social context. Since critical discourse analysis' use has become more widespread, critics argued it has moved away from linguistics and has become less rigorous in its application. Rogers (2004) viewed these critiques as possibilities for the future advancement of critical discourse analysis, which could help better define its role in the changing landscape of social and linguistics theories and methods. Additional

critiques of critical discourse analysis have focused on the lack of a clear data analysis process (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

To counter these critiques, this research study utilized DHA (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), a type of critical discourse analysis that offered a clear sequence of operations to employ when analyzing texts. This approach to critical discourse analysis also encouraged researchers to situate texts within their original social and political contexts, so that triangulation of findings can occur.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) – Counter-narratives

After analyzing media reports in order to unmask the master narrative about VHS, I employed the methodology of Critical Race Theory (CRT), specifically counter-narratives, to hear from teachers, alumni, and community elders about their experiences living, working, and attending school in the VHS community.

Historical roots. Primary in its tenets, CRT contended that since race and racism were socially constructed, both race and racism could be deconstructed via the deployment of narratives of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As many researchers have pointed out, this approach related to the rich tradition of storytelling that has been present in the African American community (Baszile, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009).

Definition and purpose. Often told from different ways of viewing and knowing the world, stories of people of color have helped to illustrate how racial prejudice functions in American society, including its institutions, such as the judicial and legislative systems (Buendia, 2001). Although these stories could sometimes be disregarded (Buendia,

2001), their narration assisted the individual who has experienced a racist or discriminatory act. As Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) stated, “historically, storytelling has been a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression” (p. 174-175). Storytelling about racism and discrimination could be a way to reduce the power of that experience, to assist the individual in naming the horror so that it can no longer injure the storyteller (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In this way, the testimony became an act of “bearing witness—from a critical perspective—to the traumas of racism” (Baszile, 2008, p. 253). Bearing witness also served to reveal to the perpetrators their role in injuring the speaker, which sometimes helped to reduce future acts of racism or discrimination (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009).

Researchers who employed storytelling methods in order to counteract racism have utilized a variety of names for these types of stories, such as testimonials, folktales, poetry, parables, and revised histories (Baszile, 2008; Tate, 1999). In particular, the use of the term counter-narrative has become frequent. In essence, a counter-narrative was a story that contradicted the dominant White, male, upper class, Euro-centric way of viewing the world and instead offered a story from a marginalized person of color’s point of view (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counter-narratives intervened in a positivist-dominated tradition of research by deploying a method that provided an opportunity for an individual of color to speak his/her story of living within a particular social and historical time period. A counter-narrative offered an alternative way of knowing and viewing the world and functioned as an “epistemological intervention,” which “challenged traditional research paradigms,

texts, and theories that have been used to explain the experiences of people of color” (Baszile, 2008). Counter-narratives offered an alternative view to the master narrative of traditional positivist research methodologies. As such, counter-narratives functioned as “a first step on the road to justice” (Ladson-Billings & TateIV, 2009) because they challenged traditional, racist epistemologies and research methodologies, and provided those who have previously been silenced the opportunity to speak.

The use of counter-narratives. Yosso (2006) pointed out that communities of color have always cultivated rich traditions of storytelling, partly in response to the oppression of majoritarian, or dominant, stories. For her counterstories did not seek to deny the presence of racism, but rather the opposite, to illustrate that racism persists. Yosso (2006) defined three types of counterstories, “autobiographical, biographical, and composite,” which rely on “multiple forms of data” (p. 10). She offered four ways that counterstories function: to build community; to challenge the dominant group’s oppressive beliefs; to cultivate community memory and resistance; and to transform education.

Montoya (2000), a LatCrit scholar, pointed to the role that storytelling can play in writing for legal audiences. As she stated, stories told “by those on the bottom” could unmask and dispute traditional hierarchies and patriarchy (Montoya, 2000, p. 522). Narratives told by the marginalized about their experiences could empower the speaker and listener because they challenge the typical narrative of the dominant group.

Limitations and future recommendations. Yosso (2006) addressed four main critiques about counterstories: a) they were not typical; b) they were not generalizable; c)

they were not rigorous and d) they were not truthful (Yosso, 2006). In response, Yosso (2006) argued that counterstories were not meant to stand for an entire community by being typical or generalizable, but rather to reveal longstanding “patterns of racialized inequality” (p. 13) through the experience of one person. She attributed a lack of respect to the CRT scholarship as the rationale for not seeing the rigor in counterstories. Finally, she offered that a belief in an objective totalizing “truth” is consistent with majoritarian storytelling and that the use of counterstories rejects such an epistemology.

By using counter-narratives in this study, I contributed to the conversation about the use of counter-narratives in educational research. Additionally, as Solorzano & Yosso (2009) discussed, counter-narratives have undermined master narratives told about communities of color and have deepened the resilience and resistance of communities of color by uniting them around shared storytelling and imagined alternatives to their current marginalization. For these reasons, the use of counter-narratives in this study challenged the master narrative about the VHS community, engaged a long-standing tradition of resilience and advocacy in that community, and assisted in uniting the community in a shared enterprise of storytelling and visioning for the future.

Design and Procedures

This qualitative research study unmasked the master narrative about the VHS community and provided community members with the space and time to narrate their own stories of living and attending school in the VHS community. Among the reasons that this study fit into a qualitative paradigm were its occurrence in a natural setting, its foregrounding of community members’ voices, its reliance on inductive data analysis,

and its belief in reflexivity between researcher and participants (Hatch 2002). As Wolcott (1994) wrote, “Qualitative researchers need to be storytellers” (p. 17). Indeed, this study sought to do just that—to listen to the stories of the members of the VHS community and to retell them.

The study’s design was emergent (Creswell, 2009) meaning that it could not be “tightly prescribed” (p. 176). Nevertheless, the research study was conceptualized as occurring in four stages of data collection and data analysis. Stages were not discrete, and in fact data collection and data analysis were circular in nature. Following is a description of the stages of the research study:

1. Stage 1—Critical discourse analysis of mainstream media texts. I utilized numerous resources to retrieve mainstream media coverage about VHS. I then conducted a critical discourse analysis, utilizing the steps outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2009) in their Discourse-Historical Approach, or DHA.
2. Stage 2—Selection of participants and individual interviews. I used convenience and snowball sampling to select participants from the VHS community. I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with participants in an effort to hear their stories about teaching, attending school, and living in the community. I transcribed all interviews and utilized the procedures outlined by Hatch (2002) to conduct inductive data analysis to discover emergent themes.
3. Stage 3—Focus group interviews. I invited participants to engage in two focus group interview sessions in an effort to deepen the sharing of stories and to

member check around emergent themes. I transcribed these focus group interviews and again utilized the steps of the inductive data analysis process described by Hatch (2002).

4. Stage 4–Follow-up interviews and member checks. I conducted unstructured follow-up interviews to clarify stories presented in the Stages 2 and 3. I also shared transcripts of interviews and some initial findings with participants so that they could participate in member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In the next portion of this chapter, I first discuss in detail the data collection process in each of these four stages. Second, I address the participant selection process and setting for the study. Third, I explain the data analysis process in this study. Fourth, I clarify how I established trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in this study.

Data Collection Processes

Stage 1–Critical Discourse Analysis of Texts

As Hatch (2002) noted historical studies often involve the use of primary or secondary sources. In this particular research study, I gathered media accounts of VHS over the years 1990-2010 via a number of electronic databases and archival sites. The electronic databases included the following:

- Ethnic News Watch: A database that archives news reports from media that serve ethnic and minority communities.
- Proquest: *Los Angeles Times* Historical: A database that archives newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Times* from the years 1881-1986.

- Proquest: *Los Angeles Sentinel* Historical: A database that archives newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a newspaper serving the African American community, from the years 1934-2005.
- Proquest National Newspaper Core: A database that archives local, regional, and national newspaper articles from 1985-current.
- Lexis-Nexis: A database that archives newspaper articles, magazine articles, broadcast transcripts, and wire services from major national publications and TV and radio broadcasts from 1980-current.
- Google: A search engine that archives webpage content.

These electronic databases provided access to secondary sources representing a variety of media, including newspaper articles, television news transcriptions, photographs, and videos. Search parameters for these databases included the following terms: “[Victory],” “high school,” and “Los Angeles.” Over 500 source materials were located via these terms in these electronic databases. All source materials were retrieved from an archive or electronic database, and then either photocopied, printed, or saved electronically.

Copies of the VHS student newspaper also served as source materials. A recent student newspaper publication was available on-line. Older editions were available from the school library.

To look for additional coverage, I investigated the presence of texts about VHS on a variety of websites. The following is a list of these sites:

- MySpace: A social media website that allows users to post pictures, videos, and information about themselves.

- Facebook: A social media website that allows users to post status updates, links, and events so that they can connect and share with other users.
- YouTube: A website archive of video footage posted by users.

Finally, I explored various historical archives for texts about VHS. These archives were as follows:

- LAUSD Art and Artifact Collection (Archives): An archive of over 30,000 materials and artifacts from the district's opening in 1855 to present day.
- Southern California Library: A library dedicated to archiving and preserving documents and artifacts related to the various histories of communities who have fought for justice in Southern California.
- USC Regional History Collection: A special collection that maintains and collects artifacts from the history of the Los Angeles region.
- Victory High School library: The library holds copies of the school's newspapers and yearbooks from the school's opening in 1921 to present day.

The process used to find all sources was documented in my reflexive journal in an effort to maintain records and if necessary return to these sites for additional clarifying information.

Stage 2 – Participant Selection and Individual Interviews

In the data collection phase of Stage 2, several activities occurred. First, I established the research setting and I selected four teacher participants. Second, I gained access to interview these four teacher participants and followed protocols outlined by the Loyola Marymount University Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to gain

participants' consent. I then conducted individual interviews with these participants. Using a nomination process and snowball sampling, I then selected the four alumni participants and the four community elder participants. Again I gained access with these participants and obtained their consent to participate in the study. I interviewed all eight of these participants in individual interviews. All individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

In the next section, I provide details about each facet of Stage 2 of the data collection process, including the research setting, participant selection process, gaining access process, and individual interview process.

Research Setting

Victory High School (VHS) was located in Los Angeles, California in an area of the city called South Central Los Angeles. The school operated as part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The following sections provide brief histories about the city of Los Angeles, the area known as South Central, the LAUSD, and VHS.

Overview of Los Angeles. Named by its Spanish founders in 1781, the city of Los Angeles has experienced numerous changes throughout the years (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). Although it remained relatively small throughout the early part of the 19th century, the city experienced major expansion in the later half of that century and the beginning of the 20th century as individuals attempted to grab land and industrial complexes grew (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). In 1930 the city's population surpassed 2.2 million residents and some thirty years later in 1960 the population was well over six million (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). As the population grew, so too

did the boundaries of the city as numerous suburbs popped up outside of the city's traditional boundaries, creating the larger metropolitan area of Los Angeles County (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported the city of Los Angeles as constituting over 450 square miles of land and almost 3.7 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). For the same year, the U.S. Census Bureau reported the county of Los Angeles as including over 4,000 square miles of land and over 9.5 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Demographically, the city of Los Angeles has experienced numerous shifts. In 1920, only 17% of the city's residents were foreign-born, a small amount when juxtaposed to New York's 35% (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). Yet, the period of 1960 to 1990 brought a wave of Mexican, Central American, and Asian immigrants, who in 1990 accounted for 27% of the city's population (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). Over 50% of these immigrants came from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). Asian immigrants from China, the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, and India comprised the other large portion of Los Angeles's immigrant population (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). In 1980, one-third of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. lived in Los Angeles, a fact that could be attributed to Los Angeles's location in Southern California and to its numerous immigrant enclaves that supported newly arrived immigrants (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996).

Overview of South Central. Nowhere were the shifting demographics of Los Angeles more evident than in its south area. Located south of downtown, the area was given its "south" nickname due to its geographic location. Additionally, though, the

community during the 1920s and 1930s experienced the arrival of many African Americans from the southern part of the United States (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006). This area was the only one in which African Americans could purchase houses, as restrictive housing covenants in other parts of the city and in neighboring cities prohibited African Americans from owning homes (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006). By extension, African Americans could also own and operate businesses in this area, a factor that improved many families' overall socioeconomic standing (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006).

Among the areas that most stood out during the 1920s and 30s was along Central Avenue, where a number of African Americans owned businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and jazz clubs (Bunch, 1990). Among the most famous was the Dunbar hotel, one of the only hotels in the city of Los Angeles where African Americans could stay due to restrictive practices and racism (Sides, 2003). The hotel hosted such jazz luminaries as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong (Sides, 2003). Given the presence of great musicians, Central Avenue became a beacon for African American artists, authors, and more, even earning a reputation for being a smaller, west coast version of Harlem (Sides, 2003).

Due to its tremendous influence on the African American community, Central Avenue provided half of its name for the moniker for this area – South Central (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006). Coined by African Americans to refer to the corridor along Central Avenue, the term South Central gained more widespread use in the 1950s when local utility agencies and government boards used it to refer to this specific region of Los

Angeles (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006). Yet, each particular agency and board had a different set of parameters to define the region, and thus, the term South Central became applied less precisely to a larger area in South Central (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006).

After World War II, even more African Americans migrated to Los Angeles, which produced even stricter housing covenants, forcing African Americans to seek housing more exclusively in South Central (Bunch, 1990). Yet, this era also ushered in a number of employment opportunities in the auto industry, food industry, and steel industry (Sides, 2003). Auto manufacturers such as General Motors and Firestone, along with rubber tire plants for companies such as Goodyear, B. F. Goodrich, and U.S. Rubber opened plants in and around South Central (Sides, 2003). Although racism and discrimination occurred, for the most part African American males could secure blue-collar jobs in these manufacturing plants (Sides, 2003). Expansions in the garment industry and civil service sector helped increase employment among African American females during this time (Sides, 2003).

In the 1960s, the area experienced a number of setbacks. Manufacturing companies began moving their operations to suburbs of Los Angeles (Sides, 2003). Public transit, which had been easily available from the 1920s to 1950s, began to be reduced, a fact that decreased the mobility of most of the residents of South Central due to their low ownership of automobiles (Sides, 2003). Industrial waste began to diminish the aesthetics of the community and impact the health of residents (Sides, 2003). Increases in housing costs forced many African Americans into public housing in the area (Sides, 2003). Police harassment and abuse, an on-going problem in the community,

increased (Sides, 2003). In sum, the 1960s saw South Central become racially, socially, and spatially isolated (Sides, 2003).

The consequence of this isolation was the Watts Riots of 1965. Flaring from a police arrest of a young African American man, his brother, and his mother, the Watts Riots involved approximately 10,000 African Americans in a 46-square mile area in and around the area of Watts (Sides, 2003). Lasting for six days, the riots resulted in the destruction of 261 businesses, most of which were White-owned (Sides, 2003).

After the Watts riots, federal funds from the War on Poverty poured into Los Angeles, yet political wrangling at the local government level meant that many of these funds did not filter into the South Central area (Sides, 2003). However, the rise of the Civil Rights movement in Los Angeles toward the later part of the 1960s mobilized the community to fight for desegregation (Sides, 2003). An outgrowth of this mobilization were gains in local and state political representation, as an increase in African American voters in the community led to the election of African American politicians.

Nonetheless, the 1970s and 1980s saw an increase in job losses due to the disinvestment of companies from the community (Sides, 2003). Manufacturing plant closures shook the community: Chrysler in 1971, B. F. Goodrich in 1975, Uniroyal in 1978, Firestone in 1980, Goodyear in 1980, and General Motors in 1982 (Sides, 2003). From 1978 to 1982, more than 70,000 jobs vanished from the area in and around South Central.

Without jobs, many African American youths turned to gangs and drug sales in the 1980s (Sides, 2003). The spread of crack cocaine created a thriving underground

economy as well as many addicts (Sides, 2003). As the epidemic of crack cocaine spread, many more youth joined gangs and engaged in violence against each other (Sides, 2003). The origins of two of the most famous gangs in the United States, the Crips and the Bloods, can be traced to South Central during this time (Sides, 2003). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the term South Central became synonymous with gang culture and spread through the music of various rap artists, such as Eazy E and Ice Cube, and through a number of films, such as *Colors* (1988) and *Boyz in the Hood* (1991; Sides, 2003).

Years of police abuse, poverty, and unemployment in the area of South Central converged on April 28, 1992, when a white jury in a suburb outside of Los Angeles returned a verdict of not guilty in the case of four White Los Angeles Police Department Officers who were charged with beating an African American man named Rodney King (Sides, 2003). The verdict prompted outrage and violence in South Central and throughout Los Angeles (Sides, 2003). At the end of the riots, 52 people were dead, 2,383 were injured and property damages reached one billion dollars (Sides, 2003, p. 203). Businesses owned by Koreans were targeted during the riots, as were White and African American businesses (Sides, 2003). Approximately 16,000 people were arrested, and among the arrests were more Latinos than African Americans (Sides, 2003), a sign of a demographic shift that had started in the community and would continue.

The 2000 census marked this change, as it showed that the Latino population composed 58% of South Central, while the African American population composed 40% (Sides, 2003). The demographics shift could be attributed to African Americans finding

increased housing opportunities outside of South Central, while Latino immigrants, repeating a century old cycle, sought and found low-income housing in the area (Sides, 2003). For many African Americans the demographics shift represented a tremendous loss for a community that had been forced by racism and legally restrictive housing covenants into the area of South Central, where they cultivated a tremendous sense of pride and ownership about their neighborhood, fighting to improve it by increasing their political presence and involvement in schools (Sides, 2003).

In 2003, the Los Angeles City Council voted to change the name of the area from South Central to South Los Angeles, citing the relationship of the term South Central to a number of rap songs and movies about gang violence and drugs (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006). The name change while symbolic contributed to the narrative being spread by residents in the area and in 2003 by local politicians that South Central had been “killed” (Sides, 2003, p. 194). Yet, as Sides (2003) pointed out, the death of South Central, the loss of “blue-collar” jobs “had its origins in regional, national, and global economic restructuring, transformations far beyond the reach of city hall” (p. 194).

Although the term South Central has become contested space, this research project referred to this area by that term. Among the reasons for this decision, was the fact that community members, including many participants in this study, utilized the term South Central, rather than south Los Angeles. In addition, the decision to change the name of the community coincided with political and corporate interests, both of which have deleteriously affected this community. In an effort not to reinscribe this narrative, then, this research study relied upon the term South Central.

Overview of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). As the city of Los Angeles transformed from a small western outpost to a large city, the school district also had to adapt. A number of Progressive-minded individuals, such as John Randolph Haynes and Caroline Severance, along with a few Progressive-era organizations such as women's clubs, ushered in several reforms as the school district grew (Kerchner, Menefee-Libey, Steen Mulfing & Clayton, 2008). Among the reforms that occurred during the early 20th century were the incorporation of kindergarten into the school district, universal opportunities for school until 14-years old, civil service style employment system, and election of school board members (Kerchner et al., 2008). In addition, the school district was influenced by the rise of Frederick Taylor's management theory, and attempted to construct a school system built on the basis that a bigger organizational structure, either at a school or in a district, operated more efficiently and cost effectively (Kerchner et al., 2008). All of these reforms helped to construct a school system that became the pride of the city, earning recognition across the United States (Kerchner et al., 2008). In the 1950s, LAUSD was ranked among the top five districts in the United States (Kerchner et al., 2008). The district's graduation rate was among the top 30 percent of the nation (Kerchner et al., 2008).

The district's reputation began to decline in the 1960s during a time when finances were scarce and lawsuits were filed to desegregate schools (Kerchner et al., 2008). Large-scale student walkouts in 1968 disrupted the calm that school district officials had tried to cultivate (Kerchner et al., 2008). Formed in 1968, the teacher's union, United Teachers of Los Angeles conducted a strike in 1970 and fought for

collective bargaining, eventually earning the right in 1975 (Kerchner et al., 2008). The 1971 *Serrano vs. Priest* lawsuit, in which the state legislature created a new equitable financing formula for school districts, and the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, which capped taxes for homeowners, both dramatically changed the landscape of school financing in California (Kerchner et al., 2008).

Additional pressure in the late 1970s came from the release of a variety of research reports detailing a wide achievement gap between students of color and White students (Kerchner et al., 2008). These data diminished the school district's reputation in the eyes of its local residents and the nation, particularly when the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) focused national attention on the performance of students in school districts across the country (Kerchner et al., 2008).

In addition to pressure to decrease the achievement gap, LAUSD experienced an influx of new Latino immigrants during the 1980s (Kerchner et al., 2008). A majority of these students spoke Spanish as their home language, which required the school district to construct bilingual programs, train faculty in delivering instruction to English language learners, and provide different instructional materials (Kerchner et al., 2008). During this time, the city and school district experienced a bulge of students, necessitating the use of year-round calendars, in order to accommodate the influx of students (Kerchner et al., 2008). Simultaneously, the economy of the city shifted as manufacturing companies, which employed skilled laborers at higher wages, shut down (Kerchner et al., 2008). This loss of economic opportunity resulted in higher levels of poverty in the city, and naturally

in the schools (Kerchner et al., 2008). The largest teacher strike ever in LAUSD history, orchestrated by United Teachers Los Angeles, occurred in 1989, capping off a turbulent, difficult decade (Kerchner et al., 2008).

The decade of the 1990s witnessed the stabilization of school funding in California with the passage of Proposition 98, which guaranteed a percentage of the state's general funds be allocated to schools each year (Kerchner et al., 2008). The passage of Proposition 187 in 1994 and Proposition 227 in 1998 illustrated an intense backlash toward Latino immigrants and affected schools' ability to provide bilingual education to students learning English as a second language (Kerchner et al., 2008). Proposition 209, passed in 1996, prohibited the use of affirmative action in hiring decisions in the public sector and rolled back gains made during the 1960s and 1970s to advance the civil rights of people of color.

Once thought to be a model of efficiency due to its large size, LAUSD became intensely scrutinized for its expansion of non-school site personnel and bureaucracy (Kerchner et al., 2008). A number of public scandals involving the misappropriation of funds, particularly for construction of new schools, intensified the public distrust of the school district and drew intense media scrutiny (Kerchner et al., 2008).

Naturally, the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 changed the way in which LAUSD operated. The need to test students annually and to publicize results opened the school district to public scrutiny and constituted a call for numerous reforms (Kerchner et al., 2008). Among the reforms was the passage of bond measures meant to provide funds for the school district to build new schools to alleviate widespread

overcrowding and use of the year-round system (Kerchner et al., 2008). At the close of 2010, the district's school construction program had built 74 new schools (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2009b). Additional reforms focused on the implementation of district-wide curricular changes, including the use of a common instructional program at the elementary level, common periodic assessments, and even a high school exit exam, which although mandated by the state legislature, required a number of additional resources (Kerchner et al., 2008).

A bid for mayoral control in the later part of the decade resulted in a lengthy court battle between the school board and the mayor, which resulted in a power sharing dealing (Kerchner et al., 2008). Additional changes to the district occurred due to the presence and rise of charter schools, which reduced the district's population from its own schools, pressured additional reform efforts to accommodate their presence, and also engendered additional scrutiny about the performance of district schools (Kerchner et al., 2008). In response to this pressure, in 2009 the LAUSD school board passed the Public School Choice motion that opened the process of operating new schools and certain focus schools that met specific qualifications to Charter organizations, community organizations, and other non-profit organizations (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2010).

Perhaps, though, no other reform had more impact than the severe budget cuts the district faced from 2009 to the present day due to the United States' economic recession. These cuts prompted the school district to cut their budget by 1.5 billion dollars, lay off

over 6,000 thousand employees, furlough over 60,000 employees, eliminate programs and increase class sizes (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2011).

Victory High School (VHS). Opened in 1924 as part of the LAUSD, Victory High School (VHS) served the predominantly White students and families that lived in the working class community. Migration of African Americans into South Central prompted an increased enrollment of this population in VHS during the 1940s (Bunch, 1990). Although the policy of the LAUSD did not explicitly prevent African Americans from attending neighborhood schools (Sides, 2003), White VHS students protested the presence of African American students in 1941, even going so far as to burn effigies of these students (Bunch, 1990).

Despite the racism perpetrated, African Americans remained at the school, transitioning the school into a multiethnic place that included White students, African American students, and Latino students (Sides, 2003). In fact, before World War II, African Americans, Latinos, and Whites were equally represented in and around the area of VHS (Sides, 2003). Yet, after World War II, White flight to the suburbs, Latino flight to East Los Angeles and increases in African American migration from the South positioned VHS to become predominantly an African American school, which it did and remained until the mid 1980s, when Latino immigrants moved into the community (Sides, 2003).

In 2010, 86 years after its opening, VHS was 93% Latino and 7% African American (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2009a). The campus operated as a large comprehensive high school with over 4,000 students in grades 9 – 12, 250 faculty

members, 15 counselors, 25 clerical staff, 70 support staff, five administrators and one principal (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2009a). The school operates on a year-round schedule, in which three tracks, or groups, of students and teachers rotated throughout the year. The school utilized one main building for a majority of classes and additional classes were held in portable classrooms, known as bungalows. The school also contained one library, two gyms, one football field with a track and tennis courts, and one swimming pool that the city operates. Given the year-round schedule, maintenance crews worked regularly on the campus, at times during the school day.

From the years 2004-2010, the school was structured into 12 thematic small learning communities and one math and science magnet school. After the school's reconstitution in 2010, the small learning communities were closed and six career-based academies were opened along with a ninth grade house. The magnet school remained.

VHS maintained a variety of academic and extra-curricular programs, including an Advanced Placement program, Athletics, and Band. Victory Youth Empowered through Action was a community-organizing group that had a longstanding presence on the campus and was an extension of a similarly named organization that served the surrounding community. Individual teachers sponsored additional clubs upon student request. A few examples of clubs included the Folklorico club, Calculus club, and French club.

The school district provided VHS with two school district police officers, one city police officer, and one probation officer. In the community surrounding the school, there were two main gangs, one composed of predominantly Latinos and the other composed

of predominantly African Americans. Within the VHS student population, there are members of these gangs and the Dean's Office worked closely with the Los Angeles Police Department and local gang prevention community organizations to monitor and assist students who were involved in these gangs. Additionally, some students also affiliated with a variety of local tagging crews, youth who gather to do graffiti together, from the surrounding area. Graffiti and vandalism were frequent occurrences on the campus, which employed one full-time maintenance worker to repair damage done by graffiti. In 2009, security cameras were installed in the main building, which reduced the amount of graffiti in that area. The school's perimeter contained a large metal fence with numerous sliding gates for service entry and parking. In 2010 during the Reconstitution, a portion of this metal fence was taken down to permit additional community access.

Operating as a separate school, the VHS Adult School shared office and classroom space with the main school during evenings and weekends. The Adult school offered a variety of classes, including ESL classes, vocational training, and high school graduation courses. Additionally, a variety of community organizations, such as sports leagues and city police programs, utilized the school's facilities during the weekends.

Surrounding VHS, the community featured numerous single-family houses and apartment buildings. Commerce in the area included manufacturing and sales of furniture and building materials. A large post office served the community. Small family owned liquor stores, party supply stores, and restaurants also operated in the area. Nearby economic redevelopment has brought in several national chain stores, such as Petco, Ross, and CVS. Large Latino-based supermarkets also served the community.

Crime was present in the community surrounding VHS. Over the period 2007 to 2010, the *LA Times* Homicide Report (2010) documented 48 homicides within a 2-block radius of the VHS campus. The same report stated that the police department, which has jurisdiction over VHS, recorded 89 homicides in the same 3-year period.

Participant Selection

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) qualitative research requires the use of purposive sampling, convenience sampling and nomination processes in order to “maximize information” (p. 202) about a given topic of study. Purposive sampling must occur because the researcher is concerned with a particular topic of study and seeks to find participants who are knowledgeable about that topic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Convenience sampling occurs because researchers cannot know everyone who is knowledgeable about that topic, so instead they must rely on those individuals whom they know can provide insight about that topic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To extend and supplement information obtained from participants, qualitative researchers must rely upon nomination processes, so that knowledgeable participants can nominate other knowledgeable participants who are not known to the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Accordingly, this qualitative research project used purposive sampling, convenience sampling and nomination processes in an effort to select participants that were most knowledgeable about the Victory High School community during the last 20 years (1990-2010). Teacher participants were chosen based on the criterion that they worked at Victory High School for a minimum of five years during the period of time being studied, 1990-2010. I then used convenience sampling to select teacher participants

that I knew to have worked at VHS from my seven years of time teaching there. The use of purposive and convenience sampling techniques in this instance provided an opportunity to use my emic, or insider, (Hatch, 2002) viewpoint to select participants who taught at the school during the period of time under study 1990-2010.

Alumni and community elders were selected based on a nomination process. Members of the teacher sample were asked to nominate potential alumni and community elder participants who had experiences in the Victory High School community from 1990-2010. This nomination process facilitated the selection of participants who may not be known to the researcher but have additional knowledge to add to the topic of study (Hatch, 2002).

Upon initiating the participant selection process, a few of the potential participants were attending VHS as students. Since the completion of the selection process and beginning of interviews, these students graduated from VHS. Among these former students, one participated in this study, while other potential participants declined participation or were unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts.

Alumni participants, then, were defined as an individual who attended Victory High School and graduated from Victory High School during the period of time under study, 1990-2010. All alumni participants were 18 years of age or older, and therefore able to provide informed consent to participate in this study.

Community elders were defined as individuals who have lived or worked in the community surrounding Victory High School during the entirety of the period of time under study, the years 1990-2010.

Participants

For this research study, 12 participants were selected. The following represents a list of participant groupings:

1) Four Victory High School teachers. Each teacher participant taught at the high school for a minimum of 10 years during the time period of 1990-2010. Two teachers were male and two were female. Of the two male teacher participants, one was Latino and one was White. Of the two female teacher participants, one was African American and one was Latina. The age range for teacher participants was from 35-65 years old.

2) Four Victory High School alumni. Each alumni participant attended the high school during some portion of the years 1990-2010 and graduated from the high school. Two alumni were male and two were female. Of the two male alumni, one was Latino and one was African American. Of the two female alumnae, both were Latina. The age range for alumni was from 18-38 years old.

3) Four Victory High School community elders. A community elder was defined as an individual who has lived or worked in the community surrounding Victory High School during the entirety of the past 20 years, a period of time that encompasses the years 1990-2010. Three community elders were female and one was male. Three community elders were White and one was African American. The age range for community elders was from 50-68 years old.

Gaining Access

As Hatch (2002) stated, “Participants are the ultimate gatekeepers” (p. 51). It was important, then, to respect and honor participants and to make all efforts to do no harm to participants. For this reason, gaining access to participants was carefully considered.

To begin with, I obtained IRB approval from the sponsoring academic institution, Loyola Marymount University. Next, all participants completed IRB-approved consent forms, indicating their willingness to participate in this study (See Appendix A). No participants were under the age of 18 so no one was required to sign participant assent forms. I furnished each participant with a copy of the IRB-approved consent form and I filed the original form in a locked cabinet in my home. Participants were also given a copy of the California Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights (See Appendix B).

In accordance with IRB requirements, I took other measures to protect the privacy of participants. First, I carefully reviewed the IRB-approved consent form with participants (see Appendix A), specifically focusing on the parts where I detailed the use of pseudonyms, securing files and documents, and exclusion from the study if participants so desired. Second, I utilized pseudonyms in all aspects of the study, from the transcription process to the drafting process. Third, I kept all audio recordings, consent forms and other identifying documents locked in a cabinet in my house. Fourth, I password-protected files on my computer, including transcripts, drafts, and my reflexive journal.

Individual Interviews

Wolcott (2008) identified “life history interviewing” (p. 55) as a type of enquiring in qualitative research. Hatch (2002) identified three types of interviews, informal, formal and standardized. Formal interviews could be semi-structured in nature, meaning that the researcher arrives with a list of questions which function only as a springboard for the interview (Hatch, 2002). These types of interviews facilitated the deepening of conversation in order to better understand the viewpoint of participants (Hatch, 2002).

For this study, semi-structured individual interviews served as the vehicle through which participants had the space and voice to narrate their life history, particularly as it related to their experiences with VHS and the community surrounding the campus. I met with participants in their home or a location of their choosing and engaged them in narrating their story by utilizing a set of guiding questions that had been pre-approved by the Loyola Marymount University IRB (see Appendix C). These questions were meant to be a starting point for the interview. Yet, as interviews proceeded, I listened to participants and asked follow-up questions in order to clarify details and to assist in comprehension of the participant’s story.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Tapes of interviews and copies of transcripts were secured in a locked cabinet in my home. Computer files containing transcripts or other identifying documents were password-protected. I also wrote an account detailing my experience with each participant during his or her individual interview in my reflexive journal.

Stage 3 – Focus Group Interviews

As Hatch (2002) discussed focus group interviews have the advantage of providing numerous perspectives on one specific topic. Group interactions could also be viewed in focus group interviews, providing additional insight not seen during individual interviews (Hatch, 2002). Lastly, participants in a focus group interview had the ability to guide the direction of the conversation (Hatch, 2002). Although a researcher could arrive with certain questions, he or she needed to be sensitive to permitting participants to respond to other responses or questions, a phenomenon that could yield deeper understanding of the topic at hand (Hatch, 2002). Focus groups could also serve as a mode to facilitate the triangulation of data (Hatch, 2002).

For this study, I conducted semi-structured focus group interviews with VHS teachers, alumni and community elders. I invited all participants to attend a focus group interview with the goal of having two or three participants at each focus group. To begin the conversation, I utilized a set of IRB-approved questions (see Appendix D). Yet, as the conversation began, participants talked amongst themselves often going beyond a mere answering of the questions. In addition, I had the opportunity to ask follow-up questions of participants in an effort to deepen the sharing of stories (See Appendix E). I also was able to present to participants some of my initial findings from individual interviews. Participants provided feedback on these initial findings, conducting an informal type of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Tapes of the focus group interviews and copies of transcripts were secured in a locked cabinet in my home.

Computer files containing transcripts or other identifying documents were password-protected. I also wrote an account detailing my experience with each focus group interview in my reflexive journal.

Stage 4 – Follow-up Interviews and Member Checking

Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed to member checking, or the testing of emergent themes, data analysis, and interpretations with participants, as a continuous process vital for establishing credibility, a necessary criterion for insuring the trustworthiness of a case study. A researcher should not present an interpretation of a participant's story to an audience without first permitting that participant to review and respond to it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants should have an opportunity to member check the interpretation of their story and other aspects of the data analysis so that they can clarify their intention(s); correct any factual errors; intervene in any misinterpretations by the researcher; and elaborate with additional information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Securing a participant's agreement about the retelling of their story serve as a critical step in insuring the credibility of a research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Similarly, Hatch (2002) defined member checking as “verification or extension of information developed by the researcher” (p. 92). Member checking played a vital role in the validation of data, but more importantly it honored the need for the highest level of respect and ethical treatment of participants (Hatch, 2002). By returning to participants and showing them analysis from the research study, the researcher built on the symbiotic relationship she had with her research participants and upheld the trust invested in her by participants (Hatch, 2002).

For this study, member checking occurred throughout the data collection process. In an informal manner, member checking occurred during individual interviews with follow-up questions to clarify participants' stories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In focus group interviews, I not only asked clarifying questions, but I also presented participants with some initial findings from data analysis in order to receive their feedback about the veracity of these findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In Stage 4 of the research project, I conducted a more purposeful type of member check in the form of follow-up interviews and copies of transcripts. Over the course of the data collection process, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants via phone or in person. The purposes of these follow-up interviews were to assist in clarifying any information from individual interviews and to share with participants initial findings from data analysis. In addition, I furnished participants with copies of transcripts from their individual interview and, where relevant, their focus group interview. These transcripts were made available in an electronic format. Participants provided feedback on these transcripts, ranging from offering small grammatical changes to wording to emailing additional comments to include. To honor participants' time and story, I incorporated these changes into the transcripts.

Summary of Data Collection Processes

Conceptualized in four stages, this study required several processes for data collection. First, I collected texts about VHS to perform a critical discourse analysis. Second, I selected participants with whom to conduct individual interviews. Third, I invited participants to engage in one of two focus group interviews. Fourth, I completed

follow-up interviews and provided participants with copies of transcripts to member check.

Analysis of Data

Creswell (2009) acknowledged that the process of data analysis should always be “on-going” (p. 184). In this research study, each stage required an on-going process of data analysis. In Stage 1, I conducted a critical discourse analysis of mainstream media texts about VHS by using the operations outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2009) in their Discourse-Historical Approach. In Stage 2, I utilized the steps outlined by Hatch (2002) to conduct an inductive analysis of individual interview transcripts. Similarly, in Stage 3, I utilized the same steps to inductively analyze focus group interview transcripts. Finally, in Stage 4, I engaged participants in member checking transcripts and findings. In the following section, I detail all efforts of data analysis in each of the four stages of the study.

Stage 1–Critical Discourse Analysis

Reisigl and Wodak (2009) suggested eight steps to follow when using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The following is an overview of each step:

1. Researchers read and acquaint themselves with previous research on the topic under review (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).
2. Researchers systematically collect texts about the research topic (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).
3. Researchers select and prepare texts for analysis by meticulously evaluating each text based on certain criteria, such as how often the text mentions the

topic, how representative the text is of the genre being studied, and how redundant the text is (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

4. Researchers review his/her research question (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).
5. Researchers conduct a qualitative pilot analysis in which he/she analyzes texts for the main discourse topics and the discursive strategies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 29).
6. Researchers select detailed case studies, which provide rich representations of findings (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).
7. Researchers develop a critique based on case studies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).
8. Researchers transmit findings via scholarly and public media (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

This particular research study accomplished each of these eight steps throughout the chapters. Here follows an outline of how:

1. Step 1: I reviewed research pertinent to this critical discourse analysis in Chapter 2.
2. Step 2: I described the sources of texts earlier in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I provide additional details about the process for gathering texts.
3. Step 3: I addressed the preparation of texts for analysis in Chapter 4.
4. Step 4: The research questions for this study were presented frequently and can be found at the beginning of this Chapter 3.
5. Step 5: I depict the qualitative pilot study in Chapter 4.

6. Step 6: I provide case studies in Chapter 4.
7. Step 7: I provide a critique of texts in Chapter 4.
8. Step 8: I present possible applications of this critique in Chapter 5.

Stage 2–Individual Interviews

Creswell (2009) advocated the use of organized protocols when analyzing data, including the verification of transcripts for accuracy and the use of a qualitative codebook, both of which are strategies to increase reliability. To increase validity, Creswell also expected researchers to triangulate information with other sources of data, work with participants to member check emergent themes, use full, “thick” descriptions, identify the researcher’s own bias, and present any evidence that contradicts themes (Creswell, 2009).

Hatch (2002) offered step-by-step procedures for conducting inductive data analysis. In brief, he recommended that researchers identify their frame of analysis, construct domains that reflect the relationships discovered within the specified frame of analysis, code these domains, reread the data to ensure that the selected domains are supported by the data, and looked for emergent themes across the domains.

In this study, I utilized recommendations from both Creswell (2009) and Hatch (2002) in order to analyze data generated during the individual interview data collection process. To begin, I transcribed interviews within two weeks following the completion of individual interviews and I reviewed transcripts for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Next, I followed the protocol described by Hatch (2002) to conduct inductive analysis of these transcripts. I read transcripts at least twice before beginning data

analysis. I then utilized the semantic relationships outlined in Hatch (2002) to construct domains. I began hand-coding transcripts for these salient domains. Next, I re-read transcripts to ensure that data supported the salient domains and then I began looking for emergent themes across these domains. I developed an outline to show relationships in these domains. I finally chose excerpts from transcripts to provide “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) that would support the relationships in the outline. Throughout I documented the process of inductive analysis in my reflexive journal (Creswell, 2009).

Stage 3–Focus Group Interviews

All dialogue generated during the focus group interviews was audio recorded and transcribed one week after the meeting. Data analysis began upon completion of the transcription process. I followed the same steps for inductive data analysis as outlined in Stage 1 (Hatch, 2002). To insure a recursive data analysis process, I also returned to data analysis from Stage 1 to compare emergent themes across these different interviews. I documented the process of data analysis in my reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Stage 4 – Follow-up Interviews and Member Checking

During this stage of the study, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants. The purpose of follow-up interviews was to clarify information from individual interviews and to ask participants to member check themes that were emerging in the data analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These interviews were informal in nature and were not audio recorded. I did take field notes during these follow-up interviews.

In addition, I conducted member checks with participants by providing participants with copies of transcripts to review and approve (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants provided feedback that ranged from clarifying dates to providing grammatical edits. In a final opportunity to member check, participants were also provided with a draft of findings in order to provide feedback (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness in qualitative data as containing four distinct categories: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In a quantitative research framework, these terms coincided with the following concepts: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and research bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the following section, I explain the efforts that I undertook in this research project to establish the four categories needed for trustworthiness in a qualitative research framework.

Credibility

In quantitative research, internal validity is defined as the extent to which the outcome arises from manipulating the independent variable, rather than other extenuating variables (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Quantitative researchers establish internal validity by controlling for potential threats that can occur during the experiment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than seek to tightly control the circumstances of a research project, qualitative researchers instead attempt to understand the findings as composed by and of humans who each constitute reality through “a multiple set of mental constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 295).

As such, a qualitative researcher must demonstrate that she has constructed findings credibly and that those findings are credible to the individuals who constructed

them in the first place (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The term credibility more accurately captures the process needed for qualitative researchers to demonstrate internal validity and it can be established through prolonged engagement with a research site, triangulation of findings, peer debriefing and member checks.

Throughout this research process, I engaged in each of the aforementioned ways to establish credibility. For example, prolonged engagement required devoting time, developing trust, and understanding the “culture” of the community in the research project (Lincoln & Guba, p. 301). During my seven years of teaching at VHS, I had the benefit of observing the activities in and around VHS firsthand from an emic perspective (Hatch, 2002). The process of initiating this research project occurred while working at VHS, and as such, I had the opportunity to collect several documents related to the school’s history, such as school newspaper clippings, photos, and reports. Within this time frame, I also had the privilege of meeting many people, some of whom eventually became research participants. The trust built during my seven years of teaching at VHS was demonstrated in the participant selection process and in participant interviews, as participants felt more at ease in sharing stories with me due to the fact I knew them prior to beginning to collect research.

Yet, due to my departure from VHS in July 2010, I was able to gain some distance from the school site and community. This distance provided me with an opportunity to avoid what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term “going native” (p. 304), for it afforded me the chance to remove myself from the culture of the VHS community and to then examine that culture as I began the data collection process. In sum, I had the chance

to be both inside the community for a prolonged period of time and also outside of the community for a curtailed amount of time, which enabled both a time of emic, or insider, engagement and of etic, or outsider, detachment (Hatch, 2002).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested triangulation in qualitative research should occur through the use of different sources and different methods. In this research study, I utilized a variety of different sources, including participants, texts, observations and historical research. In terms of participants, 12 different participants ranging in ages, backgrounds, and relationship to the VHS community provided narratives about their experiences. In terms of textual sources, I drew upon VHS historical documents, such as school yearbooks, websites, such as [http://remember\[victory\].webs.com](http://remember[victory].webs.com), and VHS documents, such as the school's single plan for student achievement. In terms of observations, I observed a VHS alumni gathering, community meetings in the neighborhood around VHS, and staff reunions. For historical research, I found primary sources in the form of artifacts from government agencies, such as the California Department of Education. I also located a number of secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, that provided background and analysis of historical events.

As far as using different methods, in this research project I relied on several, including historical research, individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and follow-up interviews. Throughout the data collection and data analysis process, I took steps to validate sources against each other. For example, when participants spoke of their experiences being interviewed by journalists, I would research my archive of texts and verify participants' narratives. In another example, a participant, Jesse, spoke of

providing a deposition for lawyers bringing a lawsuit about school equity against the state of California. Through on-line research, I was able to locate court documents that confirmed his statements.

Throughout the qualitative research process, peer debriefing served a vital role in establishing credibility because it aided a researcher in thinking through questions, evaluating personal bias, testing out hypothesis, and enabling the release of feelings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer debriefer should be an individual who has knowledge of the research topic and research methodologies, but who is not in a position of authority over the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this research project, I had a peer debriefer with whom I consulted during the initiation of the project, the process of data collection, and the process of data analysis. Erica is a doctoral candidate in the field of education at a local university and a former teacher at VHS. Erica and I would meet approximately once every month and email regularly throughout this research project. In many ways, she aided in providing me with a space to discuss my own bias as a White, middle class female and with exploring the numerous emotions that arose while conducting research and mourning my own departure from the VHS community.

Member checking was a continual process vital for establishing credibility, a necessary criterion for insuring the trustworthiness of a case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A researcher should not present an interpretation of a participant's story to an audience without first permitting that participant to review and respond to it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants should have an opportunity to member check the interpretation

of their story and other aspects of the data analysis so they can clarify their intention(s); correct any factual errors; intervene in any misinterpretations by the researcher; and elaborate with additional information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Securing a participant's agreement about the retelling of their story serves as a critical step in insuring the credibility of a research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this research project, I employed a variety of informal member checking methods to insure that members had the opportunity to review and respond to their own and other participants' narratives. For example, I furnished participants with an electronic or copy of the transcript from our individual interview. I encouraged participants to read the transcript of our interview and to provide feedback about insertions, deletions or corrections. Participant feedback ranged from adding additional comments to providing some corrections of spelling and grammar. Participants also provided positive comments back to me, indicating that they trusted me in sharing their narrative in this research project. In addition, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants to clarify and/or augment information from individual interviews. When necessary, I also contacted participants via email or phone to verify information, such as a name or date. Participants were overly generous in their cooperation with this process.

Additionally, member checking occurred when I incorporated participants' comments into individual and focus group interviews. For example, when a participant discussed a particular event, such as the year-round schedule, I would share this with the next participant and then ask that participant about their experiences with that particular

event. In this way, participants could affirm, deny or append information provided by other participants.

Transferability

External validity is the degree to which the outcome of research can be generalized to other settings (Gay et al., 2009). Again, quantitative researchers establish external validity by controlling for threats that could reduce the applicability of research outcomes to other settings (Gay et al., 2009). The establishment of external validity is not plausible for the goal of qualitative research is to more deeply explore a particular research setting rather than to offer findings that can be generalized to other settings (Hatch, 2002). Instead, a qualitative researcher should strive to provide enough description so that readers can determine for themselves whether findings are transferable to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish the transferability of findings, a researcher should provide “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) or rich, detailed accounts of participants’ responses.

In this research project, I have endeavored to craft “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) by providing detailed biographies of participants and by providing detailed excerpts from participants’ narratives about their experiences in the VHS community. I offer a discussion about the transferability of the findings from this research project in Chapter 5.

Dependability

In quantitative research, reliability is the degree to which a particular experiment measures what it intends to measure and it is established through a series of tests that

seek to replicate results (Gay et al., 2009). For a qualitative researcher who utilizes an emergent research design, it is difficult to ensure that research findings can be replicated, instead she should focus on documenting the process of collecting and analyzing data in a way that an auditor could certify that the process met standards of research in the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed to the idea that without credibility, dependability cannot exist, and therefore, to establish credibility is to establish dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another way to establish credibility is to utilize a “reflexive journal,” which contains a narrative about the steps of the research project, a personal account of feelings and bias that arise during research, and a record of methodologies used in the data collection and analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For this research project, I kept a reflexive journal along the lines of that outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985). I made efforts to write in this journal daily and I referred back to the journal throughout the data collection and analysis processes. I offer my creation and use of this reflexive journal along with the previous discussion about credibility in this research project as evidence for the establishment of dependability in this research project.

Confirmability

Quantitative research strives for neutrality and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research denies the possibility of achieving both neutrality and objectivity and instead posits the concept that researchers should strive to make bias apparent and to insure that findings are confirmed on the basis of participants’ insights

rather than researcher biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, confirmability can be shown when multiple participants concur about an occurrence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this research project, confirmability was established by the use of triangulation and of a reflective journal both of which have been previously discussed earlier in this section. Additionally, a brief overview of my positionality was offered in Chapter 1 of this study. A more thorough discussion is offered later in this chapter.

Ethical Concerns

Impact on Participants

This research study was designed to have an emancipatory effect on participants, enabling them to speak their individual story in a safe, comfortable environment.

Participants had opportunities to review interview transcripts and to participate in member checks throughout the study. By devising a research design with multiple points of member checking, this study involved participants in not only sharing their narratives but also making meaning of data. As such, this study gave participants the power to shape the findings and to talk back to the forces of the media and governmental policies and laws that had attempted to oppress them.

This study protected the well being of participants by obtaining approval from the Loyola Marymount University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants consented to involvement in the study. Involvement in the study occurred at a time and location convenient for participants. For teacher participants, interviews occurred outside of school hours, on weekends, and at participants' places of residence. In this way, participants exercised control over the time, location, and in most cases, duration of the

interview, which protected their well-being and mitigated any stress caused by the interview process.

At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed the participant consent form, purpose of the study, and the process for the interview. Participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time and to refuse to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. At the conclusion of each interview, I reviewed the next steps in the study and answered any questions participants had about their involvement in the study. Throughout the study, I stayed connected to participants via e-mail or telephone in order to give them updates about the study, member check, and fill in details from interviews. At no time did any participant state that he or she wanted to be withdrawn from the study.

Additionally, I took steps to protect participants' privacy. First, participants' privacy was protected through the consistent, continuous use of pseudonyms throughout the study. Field notes, audio recordings, and identifying documents were kept locked in a cabinet at the researcher's home. Transcriptions of data and other documents were stored in a password-protected file and on a USB drive that was also kept in the same locked cabinet.

Impact on Community

This research study was designed as a recuperative historical intervention for a community that has been maligned by popular media accounts. By exposing the master narrative about this particular community, I hoped to disrupt the oppressive discourse that has marginalized this community. By providing community members with the

opportunity to tell their stories, we have created together a counter-narrative to the dominant master narrative, and to interrupt its perpetuation.

Positionality

Since a case study results from the interface between the participants, researcher and site, Lincoln and Guba (1990) insisted that the researcher “has an obligation to be self-examining, self-questioning, self-challenging, self-critical, and self-correcting” (p. 54). Based on this premise, I sought to provide an explanation of my positionality in an effort to clearly articulate my biases and their impact upon this study.

As a White, middle-class female, I have experienced a number of privileges vis-à-vis my relationship to the dominant class and culture in American society. These privileges have hindered my ability to fully understand the point of view of participants, many of whom are people of color. To minimize this limitation, I endeavored to explore the literature about White privilege that exists within the field of CRT and to share concerns about my bias with participants in an effort to fully situate my positionality.

Among the areas of scholarship emerging from Critical Race Theory is Critical White Studies, which attempts to place “[W]hiteness under the lens” (p. xvii) by interrogating White privilege and examining policies and laws that uphold the dominance of Whites in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). McIntosh (1990) defined White privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets” (p. 291) each of which benefitted her daily in visible and invisible ways. McIntosh (1990) admitted, “Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress, and violence which I was being subtly trained to visit in turn upon people of color” (p. 296).

Upon review of my life, I identified with McIntosh's admittance. In many respects my identification with the dominant White group, my upbringing in a White suburb and my Catholic school education benefitted me greatly enabling me to access the dominant power structure while believing that it was my own efforts rather than that of White privilege that created my success. For many years, I exhibited what Flagg (1993) calls "the transparency phenomenon: the tendency of Whites not to think about Whiteness, or about norms, behaviors, experiences, or perspectives that are white-specific" (p. 629).

As a graduate student of literature at the University of Washington, I was first exposed to theories regarding White privilege and racism. Through great thinkers such as W. E. B. DuBois and transnational theorists such as Paul Gilroy, I had the opportunity to interrogate my own beliefs about race and to confront the privileges that had previously been hidden to me. My education at Loyola Marymount University in the School of Education first as a master's student and then as a doctoral student further enabled me to deepen my study of social justice and to develop ways to confront my biases. I have learned, with the help of my professors and colleagues, to develop the ability to talk about race, class, and my own privileges in both of these categories.

In my teaching practice, I am certain that my White privilege and middle-class orientation appear in the classroom. Although I have attempted to be vigilant about the presence of these privileges and beliefs, I remain convinced that their presence escapes my notice, that the invisible remains just that. Further, though, I have recognized that my role as a public school teacher serves to replicate racial and economic dominance in the

classroom. I am part of a system that marginalizes poor people of color. It is a reality that I attempt to transcend through a variety of efforts, including the use of critical pedagogy, the fostering of social-justice awareness and advocacy, and the practice of an ethic of care towards my students.

Aware of my White privilege, I have realized that my history with the VHS community equipped me to conduct this research study. My seven years of teaching and leadership experience at VHS enabled me to observe numerous facets of the campus, from the college center to the programming of classes. I have served on numerous committees, including the Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation team, Local School Leadership Council, and professional development committee. I was the advisor for numerous student organizations, including the Victory Youth Empowerment through Action organization, Link Crew, and student leadership club. I have also participated in numerous parent events and community forums. In sum, my experience positioned me as a knowledgeable storyteller, who had insight into the VHS community and its practices.

In 2010, the school's impending reconstitution and my own desire for a change, prompted me to seek employment at another high school. As a result, as of the fall of 2011, I no longer was a faculty member of VHS. Despite my departure, I chose to continue to pursue this research project. As a result, I have had the experience of being a member of the VHS community and of being an outsider, a position that gave me insight into the community and yet some distance from the community. Throughout this research

project, I have negotiated this position of being an insider and an outsider, a liminal space that has been at times uncomfortable and frustrating, but throughout enlightening.

Conclusion

Based on the purpose of this study to counter narrate the mainstream media's master narrative about the VHS community, critical discourse analysis and CRT's method of counter-narratives offered the best research approaches. Both approaches aligned to the use of the theoretical frameworks of master narrative theory, CRT, and social capital theory. Additionally, these approaches offered a vehicle for VHS community members to speak their story of their experience. This opportunity could intervene in the negative discourse that has framed these individuals and provide an alternative way of knowing this community.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Restatement of Purpose of the Study

Utilizing the theoretical lenses of master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman 1988), this qualitative research study revealed the master narrative that developed in the mainstream media about the Victory High School (VHS) community over the past 20 years. Located in South Central, Los Angeles, VHS and the surrounding community have been the subject of media scrutiny in local and national publications.

Focusing on mainstream media accounts of VHS over the years 1990-2010, this research project utilized critical discourse analysis, specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), to critically analyze news articles. Findings from this analysis are presented in this chapter. In addition, an explanation of how these findings constituted a historical master narrative also is presented. Once unearthed, this master narrative has the potential to be counter-narrated and analyzed to determine what interests it protects (Yosso, 2006).

As such, this research study also utilized critical race methodology to allow teachers, alumni, and community elders to counter narrate the media's dominant discourse. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, convenience sampling and a nomination process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and together we engaged in individual interviews and focus group interviews, both of which were designed to enable participants to tell their stories of teaching, going to school, and living in the VHS

community. Data from these interviews were coded inductively and results of this analysis are presented in this chapter.

This chapter is organized into two parts. The first part details the process used for the critical discourse analysis, offers the findings from this analysis, and discusses how these findings constitute a master narrative. The second part describes the process utilized to engage participants in telling their story of being a member of the VHS community and the findings that resulted from these stories.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What has been the master narrative of Victory High School portrayed through mainstream media accounts, such as newspaper articles and television news footage, during the years 1990-2010?
2. What narratives emerged when Victory High School teachers, alumni, and community elders narrate their personal stories?
3. What interests did the master narrative about Victory High School protect?

Introductory Summary of the Findings

The critical discourse analysis of mainstream media about VHS and the surrounding community from 1990 to 2010 revealed a master narrative that negatively portrayed this working class community of color as replete with crime, violence, poverty, and racial tension. A racialized discourse emerged about the changing demographics of the community and pit two groups of marginalized people—African Americans and Latinos—against each other in a battle to find jobs in a community where few remained.

The community members, who were the victims of shifts in the nation's economy, were blamed, while the sources of this shift, policies from local, state, and federal government, were held blameless. Poverty and unemployment were offered as naturalized experiences, repercussions for this community that rioted in 1992. Isolated from historical, social and political context, South Central became the deserving loser in the city's narrative about prosperity and success.

Similarly the high school functioned as the loser in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). VHS became the representative of all that is wrong with public education—crime, low-test scores, incompetent teachers, dropouts—all of which illustrated how public schools wasted public funds, which should be diverted elsewhere, such as to charter schools. Portrayed as irrecoverable, the only solution for VHS was reconstitution, a type of starting over reform measure authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act and advanced by the Obama administration. As community members were scapegoated, the representatives and mechanisms of state, local, and federal policies escaped unscathed.

Contextualized over a number of years, participants' narratives painted a more nuanced view of the campus and community. Participants highlighted the presence of a variety of opportunities at the school in the 1980s. Beginning in the 1990s, changes in local, state, and federal policies had a tremendous impact on the school, reducing the number of opportunities available for students, destabilizing the school's curricular program, and fragmenting the school community. Together these policies produced a profound loss of the school's collective identity, history, and cultural memory.

Participants' narratives began a process of healing, a process of recollecting for a community the fragmented pieces of its past.

The Process: Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

In this study I utilized a specific type of critical discourse analysis known as the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which enabled the study of discourse within texts over a longer historical period (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The DHA facilitated the illustration of “narratives” that “cover up ruptures, war crimes and conflicts which have occurred in the past” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 19). Like other types of critical discourse analysis, this approach was problem-oriented, but unlike other types of critical discourse analysis, it evaluated changes in discourse over a long period of time, encouraged the use of fieldwork to assist in understanding the subject under study, and the results to be made public via both scholarly journals and more publicly accessible mediums, such as newspapers and Internet websites (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

The process of data analysis in the DHA is meant to be recursive, moving between data analysis and research questions in an effort to ensure an alignment between the two (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). This approach advocated validity be established through the use of triangulation at four different levels: a) the textual level, b) interdiscursivity, or links, to other texts, c) the contextual level, and d) the larger historical context of the research subject (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Reisigl and Wodak (2009) recommended eight steps be followed when conducting a critical discourse analysis using the DHA:

1. Review relevant literature.
2. Systematically collect texts about the research topic.
3. Prepare texts for analysis by evaluating them based on certain criteria.
4. Review the research questions.
5. Conduct a qualitative pilot analysis to discover the main discourse topics and discursive strategies.
6. Select detailed case studies to illustrate findings.
7. Use case studies to develop a critique.
8. Transmit findings to academic community and public.

For four reasons, the DHA was the best methodology for this research study.

First, the DHA's purpose of exposing narratives over a historical period matched the purpose of this research study, which was to reveal the master narrative hidden within the mainstream media's discourse about the VHS community. Second, the DHA encouraged participation in fieldwork, which complemented the second part of this study where qualitative research methods were used to engage participants in telling their stories. Third, the DHA required triangulation with historical research, which occurred in this study. Fourth, the DHA furthered the goal of publishing research in an effort to inform scholars but also to raise awareness among public citizens aligned with the goals of this overall research study.

With regards to the procedure outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2009), this particular research study accomplished each of these. Here is an overview of how:

- Step 1: I reviewed relevant literature in Chapter 2.

- Step 2: I described the sources of texts in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I provide a more detailed description of the process for gathering texts.
- Step 3: I explained the preparation of texts for analysis in Chapter 4.
- Step 4: The research questions for this study were present throughout the study and appeared at the beginning of this chapter.
- Step 5: I describe the qualitative pilot study in Chapter 4.
- Step 6: I provide detailed case studies in Chapter 4.
- Step 7: I provide a critique of texts in Chapter 5.
- Step 8: I present possible applications of this critique in Chapter 5.

The next portion of the study explored steps 3, 5, 6 and 7 of those outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2009).

Selection and Preparation of Data for Analysis

Based on the recommendations of Reisigl & Wodak (2009), data has been downsized by applying a test of three criteria: a) presence in a mainstream media publication, b) frequency of mention of VHS in the text, and c) redundancy of text.

The first criterion applied to each text was its presence in a mainstream media publication. In this study, mainstream media was defined as a media organization which has private corporate ownership that “sell[s] a product to an audience or advertisers” and “issue[s] stock, and generate[s] profits or losses for their shareholders” (Wilson et al., 2003, p. 39).

Using this definition, texts from many smaller publications, such as locally published papers with smaller distributions and without corporate ownership, were

eliminated from this study. In addition, a number of texts produced by three wire news services, City News Service, Associated Press, and Business Wire were eliminated because no major publication cited these texts as sources for their coverage of VHS. Copyright protocols for wire news services advise that if any portion of a wire news service article is utilized in another article, the author should credit the wire news source. Thus, it was difficult to assert that any mainstream media producer published any article created by the three wire services.

The second criterion, frequency of mention, refers to the amount of times that the topic under study is referred to within a text (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). In this study, a number of articles, particularly about sports, stated the name of the high school without any additional information. For example, scores from games featuring VHS would be recorded without any narrative about the athletes, coaches, or events of the game. Texts with only one brief mention of the name of VHS without any follow-up narrative about the community or its members were eliminated from this study.

The third criterion, redundancy of texts, refers to the same exact text appearing in the same publication (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). For example, in this study several transcripts of television news broadcasts were repeated during a newscast later in the day. The redundancy of the text required counting these events as one text, rather than three or four different ones. This criterion was applied throughout the data to reduce inflation of textual examples.

This process of downsizing yielded 306 texts, from various mainstream media outlets. Table 1 lists the top seven publishers of texts about the VHS community over the years, 1990 to 2010:

Table 1

Top Publishers of Texts about the VHS Community (1990-2010)

Publisher	Number of texts
1. <i>Los Angeles Times</i>	244
2. <i>Daily News</i>	19
3. <i>New York Times</i>	6
4. CNN	5
5. Fox News	3
6. CBS News	2
7. <i>USA Today</i>	2

As Table 1 illustrates, the *Los Angeles Times* (244 articles) is the largest producer of texts about VHS, constituting 65% of all texts produced about the school and surrounding community. The second largest producer of texts was the *Daily News* (19 texts), a newspaper that covers a different part of the city of Los Angeles. The third largest producer of texts was the *New York Times* (six texts). *CNN* (five texts), *FOX News* (three texts), *USA Today* (two texts), and *CBS News* (two texts) constituted the remaining top seven producers of texts about VHS. Twenty-five news publications each produced one text about VHS over the time period in this study. Each of these publishers was not included in Table 1 and was excluded from the pilot study and case study analyses respectively, dropping the total of texts under review to 281.

The *Los Angeles Times* contributed 80% of articles about VHS during the years 1990-2010. For this reason, closer investigation of this coverage is warranted. Within the *Los Angeles Times* coverage, the texts were distributed across a variety of sections in the

newspaper. Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of these texts within sections of the newspaper:

Table 2

Distribution of Articles within Sections of the Los Angeles Times

Section	Number of Articles
Metro	133
Sports	50
Opinion	18
City Times	14
Zones	8
View	7
Calendar	4
Column	3
Features	1
<i>Nuestro Tiempo</i>	2
Book Review	1
Business	1
Magazine	1

The section from the *Los Angeles Times* with the most texts about VHS was the Metro section (133 texts), followed by the Sports section (50), the Opinion section (18) and the City Times section (14 texts). The rest of the sections ranked in the following order: Zone (eight texts), View (seven texts), Calendar (four texts), Columns (three texts), *Nuestro Tiempo* (two texts), Business (one text), Features (one text), and Obituaries (one text).

Qualitative Pilot Analysis

As Reisigl and Wodak (2009) suggested, the qualitative pilot analysis, Step 5 in the DHA process, should be the place where a researcher tests “categories” and “assumptions” (p. 96) about discourse topics found in the texts. To begin this analysis, Reisigl and Wodak (2009) recommended three main steps: a) Identify the main discourse

topics of the texts; b) Identify the main nomination, or naming, and predication, or descriptive strategies found in the texts; and c) Focus on the argumentation strategies, including topoi, which illustrate the logic that connects arguments and conclusion.

For this study, I began the qualitative pilot analysis by reading each text in chronological order. After this step, I determined that the main discourse topics were VHS, the community around VHS, VHS students, and VHS teachers. I then read the articles for a second time and coded articles for places where these discourse topics appeared. Based on the coding done in this second reading, I began to create an index of the main discourse topics that emerged from the text.

Next, I read the articles for a fourth time and looked for discursive strategies such as the way social actors in texts were named, known as the nomination strategies, and the way these social actors were described, known as the predication strategies. I created an index to track both the nomination and predication strategies. I then read the articles for a fifth time coding the articles for the most frequently occurring discursive strategies.

Reisigl and Wodak (2001) catalogued a list of topoi, or logic strategies that have led to conclusions in texts, that occur most frequently in discourse about discrimination. Using Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) list of topoi, I read the articles for a sixth time and coded for places where these topoi appeared. I created an index to track these topoi and see which emerged most frequently.

Throughout this qualitative pilot analysis, I utilized Microsoft Excel to catalogue discourse topics in texts, to trace discursive strategies used within the articles, and to track topoi across articles. After a review of these catalogues, I discovered the most

frequently cited discourse topics, discursive strategies and topoi. I also located certain articles that displayed a high frequency of the most often used discourse topics, strategies, and topoi. I read the articles that emerged from this analysis to determine which could serve as case studies. From this reading, I selected six texts to serve as case studies.

Main discourses topics found in texts. From the qualitative pilot study, I identified the following main discourse topics about the VHS community, school, students, parents, and teachers:

- The VHS Community
 - The community transformed from predominantly African American to Latino, producing interracial tension.
 - The community experienced riots in 1992 that contributed to the dearth of businesses and jobs in the area.
 - The community around VHS had high poverty and unemployment rates in contrast with other wealthier areas in Los Angeles.
 - The community around VHS was a place where crime and violence are normalized and government institutions, such as police or politicians, appeared unable to do anything to quell these problems.
- VHS
 - VHS was an inner-city school with problems similar to other inner city schools, such as gangs, violence, and low expectations.
 - VHS was a failing school due to low scores on standardized tests.

- VHS was a “dropout” factory that hindered students’ success; if students did graduate, they do so in spite of the school.
- VHS was a school that could only be fixed by reconstitution, a reform effort authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act and advanced by the Obama administration.
- VHS Students
 - Students were lazy and unwilling to do work to be successful.
 - Students were cynical about efforts to reform their community or school.
 - Students were low-achieving based on results from standardized test scores.
- VHS Parents
 - Parents were uneducated, lacking in social capital, and unable to assist their students in being successful in school.
 - Parents were uninvolved in their children’s education.
- VHS Teachers
 - Teachers were incompetent and unqualified to teach.
 - Teachers were protected by unions and they were rabble-rousers who refused and thwarted change.
 - Teachers did not help students and in fact were uncaring about students’ success.

Main discursive strategies. The media coverage of VHS relied on two main discursive strategies: a) Nomination, or naming, strategies and b) Predication, or descriptive strategies.

Nomination strategies. Repeatedly, the community was named as poor and violent. Community members were identified by race, socioeconomic status, or immigration status. The school was named as a failing dropout factory. Students were identified by race or socioeconomic status. Teachers were named as unqualified and as union members.

Predication strategies. Metaphors and dichotomies function as the main predication strategies. The VHS community was described as poor and violent through a variety of metaphors and juxtaposition to other more affluent communities in the city. Similarly, the school was described as low performing through metaphors and dichotomies compared to other more successful schools in other areas of the city. Students were described as lazy, low achieving, and criminal. Teachers were described as incompetent and resistant to change because of their membership in the teachers' unions.

Main topoi. Topoi are the patterns of logic that enable a conclusion to be reached in an argument (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). These patterns functioned as a type of shorthand for reaching an author's desired conclusion. Critical discourse analysis enabled the exposure of topoi, or the hidden logic patterns, and assisted in exposing the underlying interests protected by the use of these logic patterns (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

In this study, I relied on the topoi, or logic, categories outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) in their long-term historical analysis of the presence of discrimination in texts in European society and politics. In the qualitative pilot study, I discovered that three topoi recurred frequently: the topos of burdening or weighing down, the topos of numbers, and the topos of culture (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

Topos of burdening or weighing down. The following statement could explain the topos of burden: “if a person, an institution or a ‘country’ is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). In the case of mainstream media coverage about the VHS community, this topos, or pattern of logic, appeared frequently as the community and its members were portrayed as “burdens” or “problems” to society that could be assisted by the enactment of some type of change. Representatives from local and state government agencies arrived on the scene to repair the community with their reform measures, painting these individuals and the mechanisms they deploy as blameless, even heroic at times. This topos of burdening or weighing down constituted a continuous cycle that blamed the community members while exonerating representatives and mechanisms of local, state, and even federal policy and law.

Topos of numbers. The topos of numbers could be defined through the following statement: if the numbers provide proof, a specific action should occur or not occur (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Throughout the mainstream media coverage, the VHS community was portrayed through a variety of statistics and numbers. These numbers, particularly when related to state standardized tests, justified the deployment of a number

of reform measures, including the reconstitution of the high school in 2009. Sources for statistics are often elided, but despite this fact, they function as irrefutable proof of the need for representatives from local and state government agencies to do something to improve the numbers. The underlying interests served by the distribution of these numbers were never exposed, again scapegoating the community and its members while exonerating any historical, legal, or political factors that may have contributed to the development of the situation portrayed by the numbers.

Topos of culture. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) described the topos of culture as “because the culture of a specific group of people is how it is, specific problems arise in specific situations” (p. 80). Throughout the mainstream media coverage, the students and residents from the VHS community were portrayed as experiencing problems due to their culture. Whether due to their identification with a certain racialized group or the fact that they spoke a different language, students and their families were portrayed as deficient in some aspect of their culture. Those deficiencies, then, became the reasons why the community experienced so many problems, including the lack of jobs, poverty, violence, and poor schools. These deficiencies naturally were manifestations of a larger, longer master narrative of discrimination about people of color in this country (Horsman, 1981).

Detailed Case Studies

Several detailed case studies are offered to demonstrate the major discourse topics and discursive strategies utilized by the mainstream media over the period of 1990-2010. In each case study I indicate the title, author, genre, and summary of the text. Following this information, I offer an analysis of the text based on the concepts developed by

Reisigl and Wodak (2009) in order to demonstrate places in the text where discourse topics, discursive strategies, and topoi, or logic patterns, emerge.

Case study #1 – March 30, 1990. The first case study was an article entitled, “Changing the Face of South Los Angeles,” which appeared in the News section of the *Los Angeles Times* on March 30, 1990. While its genre fit a news story, it differed in that it represented a special extended news story signaled by the designation of “Column One.” Written by Hector Tobar, the article’s sub-headline was “As housing prices rise and gang violence persists, blacks are moving out. Latino immigrants are taking their place.” This sub-headline provided a quick synopsis of the article’s main focus, the demographic shift that occurred in South Central Los Angeles, as African Americans moved away from the community and Latino families moved into the community.

Throughout the article a brief history of the area in and around South Central was provided. Interspersed between these snippets of history, the reporter provided statistics about the population shift, community members’ opinions about the population shift, and images that symbolized the population shift. Among the images offered by the reporter was Victory High School, a place that, in the reporter’s viewpoint, has experienced the population shift in a “dramatic” way (Tobar, 1990). At the conclusion of the article, a table provided demographic information from high schools in the South Central area, including Victory High School.

Within the article, several discursive strategies manifested, including racialized nominative and predicative strategies and a topos of burdening or weighing down. From the outset, the article’s racialized discourse became apparent. The title of the article

“Changing the Face of South Los Angeles” opened with an idiom, which operated on both the literal and figurative levels of language in this article. The idiom “changing the face of” generally means to alter something deeply. While the idiom was operational in this story, so too was a literal interpretation of the idiom, for the article literally discussed the fact that faces in the South Central area were changing from African American to Latino. Although the idiom appeared as a clever play on words, it offered a first glimpse of what would be most important in this article, race, a social construction meant to mark physical difference in skin color. Indeed, the sub-headline, which used the nominative categories of “blacks” and “Latino immigrants,” supported this idea and served instantly to identify this article with a racialized discourse about the inhabitants of South Central.

As the story opened, the lead paragraph reinforced this racialized discourse:

The transformation of South Los Angeles from a segregated black community to a Latino barrio can be both seen and heard at the intersection of Central Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, two streets long synonymous with African American Los Angeles (Tobar, 1990).

The lead paragraph signaled a dependence upon a racialized discourse as it utilized the nomination categories of “black” and “African American” interchangeably, never acknowledging that the term “black” has been used in a derogatory way to justify racism within the United States (Horsman, 1981).

Additionally, the article described this “black community” as “segregated,” a term that harkened to a time when African Americans experienced a denial of their civil rights due to White racism. The use of “Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard” within this opening paragraph recalled the Civil Rights movement as well. Here, though, these markers of a time when African Americans fought for civil rights were undercut by the final concept

constructed at the end of the paragraph: “African American Los Angeles.” The image constructed here was one of a community where African Americans have seemingly separated themselves from the rest of the city in a way that elided the true historical, political, and economic factors that produced this segregation, such as the housing covenants that legislated where African Americans could live (Sides, 2003).

The racialized discourse also applied to Latinos, as the term “barrio,” which in Spanish means neighborhood, was offered here without italics, translation, or consideration of connotation. Whether or not readers were familiar with the term was irrelevant, for the dichotomy between “black community” and “Latino barrio” clearly constructed a racialized discourse that elided the larger historical, political and economic factors constituting this change, positing in its place a focus on interracial tension and intergroup difference.

As the article continued, Tobar (1990) signaled the “transformation” of the community through changes in music (from “jazz music” to “*ranchera*”), businesses (from “barber shops” to “Latino-run appliance and furniture stores”), churches (from “black Baptist churches” to “storefront Latino evangelical”), sports (from “basketball and football” to “soccer”) and schools (from “overwhelmingly black student populations in 1980” to “Latino majorities”). These changes are clearly racialized and even polarized.

A discourse about segregation throughout the city permeated the article. African Americans who moved to California to escape Jim Crow laws and find economic opportunities were portrayed as finding the opportunity to buy homes in South Central, “one of the few places in the city where blacks could buy homes and operate businesses”

(Tobar, 1990). Latino immigrants were portrayed through metaphor as “urban pioneers,” who have moved into South Central “breaking the informal barriers that have divided the city ethnically for decades” (Tobar, 1990). On one hand, a topos of burdening or weighing down appeared to portray Latinos as brave rebels who spread racial diversity to a segregated city. On the other hand, African Americans, in the wake of Latinos’ action to end segregation, were portrayed as victims who had no choice where they lived in the city. The reporter’s bias, perhaps owing to his own Latino heritage, became clear, Latinos have agency and power, while African Americans were powerless victims.

Missing from the entire racialized discourse were the agents and mechanisms that caused the city’s racial segregation in the first place—local, state, and national laws and policies. The reporter wrote that “property deeds or social barriers” (Tobar, 1990) prevented African Americans from settling in other parts of the city. However, the reporter inhibited a deeper understanding of these causes by eliding mention of White privilege, the history of racism in Los Angeles, and the economic reasons that engendered this segregation.

To account for the increase in Latino families moving into the community, the reporter offered that the area “set a nationwide record for the greatest number of successfully completed applications for the immigration amnesty program” (Tobar, 1990). The program to which the reporter referred was known as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which was signed into law by President Reagan in 1986 (Gerkin, 2007). This program granted citizenship to undocumented immigrants who had been living in the United States for five years, created penalties for employers to hire

undocumented workers, and included non-discrimination clauses to prevent employers from discriminating against hiring immigrants (Gerkin, 2007). In many ways, IRCA assisted Latino immigrant families to improve their economic standing in the United States. According to the article, Latino families “must show that at least one member is a legal resident” (Tobar, 1990). The passage of IRCA enabled many families to obtain citizenship, which clearly became a path to home ownership, long construed as a facet of the American dream.

A racialized discourse around economic competition developed through the use of nomination, or naming, strategies in the article. In the article, Latinos were named “Spanish,” “Hispanic,” “Latinos” and of course more nationalistic identifiers, such as “Mexican,” “Salvadoran,” and “Guatemalan” (Tobar, 1990). African Americans were always referred to as “blacks” (Tobar, 1990). As the article stated, “If two or three families pool their resources—as Latino immigrants in Los Angeles often do—a home can be within the reach of even the most humble Salvadoran garment worker or Guatemalan housekeeper” (Tobar, 1990). Race, class, and national identity intersected in this statement, which reinforced stereotypes about Latino’s immigration status and work ethic.

Throughout, the article revolved around a dichotomy between African Americans and Latinos, who were pitted against each other in competition for economic resources, such as houses, jobs, and business ownership. As the article briefly mentioned, the area’s “employment picture has changed dramatically since the 1940s and 1950s” when African Americans were attracted to the area for jobs in the surrounding “shipyards” and

“factories” (Tobar, 1990). Since that time, those factories “including the Firestone Tire and the General Motors plants” (Tobar, 1990) have closed, creating a scarcity of jobs. Again, the reporter did not explore the deeper causes of this change in economic circumstances. Instead, the reporter chose to concentrate on the distinctions between African American and Latino workers.

In the article, African American workers were portrayed as picky about jobs, as they sought to find jobs that paid a higher salary due to the fact that they had more skills and training. Instead, Latino workers were portrayed as industrious, willing to work in any job for any amount of money. The following two paragraphs illustrated these points:

The blacks are mostly journeyman painters, while the Latinos are day laborers who will also accept work in just about any field, including construction and gardening. The black painters say they will only accept wages of \$80 to \$125 per day. For the Latinos, however, \$40 per day is an acceptable wage.

‘The Spanish people are out there and they’re willing to for less and less money,’ said one 36-year-old black worker. ‘There’s two totally different cultures. That’s where the problems start’ (Tobar, 1990).

The discourse about economic opportunities in the area pitted African Americans and Latinos against each other in competition for a dwindling supply of resources and jobs. African Americans, who were used to blue-collar jobs in factories, again became the victim in this competition, as they were beat out for jobs by Latino immigrants willing to work for cheaper wages. While doubtless this portrayal was accurate for the time, the portrayal deployed a larger narrative about difference, one that distinguished between the “two totally different cultures” of these two communities. A topos of culture appeared here, as African Americans and their history of blue-collar work were blamed for causing

their unemployment, while the culture of Latinos, portrayed here as willing to work any job for any amount of money, was celebrated for increasing their economic success.

In fact this portrayal was false, for there was no difference. In fact the workers were united in an effort to obtain a piece of the American economy, an economy that had changed from largely manufacturing to predominantly service-oriented, and in doing so, shrank the number of opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. Rather than address the underlying economic issues at hand, the reporter chose to paint these two minority groups as in competition with each another, a competition that exacerbated “racial tensions” (Tobar, 1990) and distracted from the real source of their unified economic woes—wealthy Whites males—who owned capital and who created laws that enabled manufacturing companies to leave economically depressed areas in order to earn and create more capital through the emergence of globalization. The portrait in this article of Latino immigrants as industrious agents who sought to improve their economic opportunities in any way and of African Americans as picky workers who require higher wage jobs with benefits appended discourses about White supremacy (Horsman, 1981) and the benefits of capitalism, especially as pertaining to globalization (Lipman, 2009), that have oppressed minority groups in order to maintain and increase the wealth and privileges of the White dominant group in the United States.

Case study #2 – October 28, 1992. The second case study was a news broadcast that appeared on the show *48 hours* which was produced by CBS News. The text was offered as part six in a series about the aftermath of the 1992 Riots in Los Angeles, which started after a jury acquitted four White Los Angeles Police Department officers in the

beating of Rodney King, an African American man. This particular episode in the series was entitled: “Part VI–LA Ground Zero: Class Struggle; South Central LA Youth Meet Employment Dead-End” (Moriarty, 1992). As indicated by the title, the news broadcast focused on youth from South Central Los Angeles and the challenges they faced in obtaining employment. Unmentioned by the title, though, was that the youths featured in the broadcast were from Victory High School. Interviews with VHS students constituted the majority of the broadcast, while images of events at VHS following the Riots, such as visits by politicians, filled in the remaining portion of the broadcast. Throughout, one reporter, Erin Moriarty, conducted the interviews, provided commentary, and narrated voiceovers.

The news broadcast opened with a metaphor for the “class struggle” portrayed in the title—a Victory High School football game:

ERIN MORIARTY: (Voiceover) As the [Victory High team takes] on their rivals...they are defending more than just a football record.

MORIARTY: Tell me honestly, when you go around and you tell people that you go to school in South Central Los Angeles...

Unidentified Teen #1: Oh, first reaction is, ‘Oh, really? You go to South Central? Dang! How do you survive there?’

MORIARTY: (Voiceover) These are not the faces you saw running through the streets of Los Angeles in April and May.

Unidentified Teen #2: Like, my cousin came over to my house one time, and he lives in Pasadena, and he didn’t even want to walk around the corner. He said, ‘I’m going to get shot.’

MORIARTY: (Voiceover) But they may be the ones who determine if it ever happens again (Moriarty, 1992).

Student voices narrated stereotypes about South Central, such as it is violent, unsafe, and avoided, especially by inhabitants in other parts of Los Angeles. The journalist attempted to counter these stereotypes through a voiceover narration that distinguished the students

from the rioters and offered the students as possible conduits of change in the community. Yet, the hope expressed by the journalist, also contained another side. Hidden within the voiceover was a threat that if change was not produced, these students could enact more chaos. Right from the start, the reporter issued a topos of burdening or weighing down the VHS students with the responsibility for bringing about change in their community.

The next discourse topic appeared through the voice and presence of the school's star quarterback, William Yates, the protagonist of the news broadcast, who had a new "part-time job" due to a "new program" at VHS that is "being funded by a major health-care company in direct response to the riots" (Moriarty, 1992). As the journalist interviewed the principal, Mr. John Haydel, she learned that only "[t]wo new programs" were instituted at VHS after the Riots (Moriarty, 1992). These two programs served about 10 out of 2,800 students at the school (Moriarty, 1992). When asking the quarterback about whether he expected more programs after the riots, the quarterback replied:

Not really because my mother—she was in the Watts riots in '65, and she said they did the same thing you're doing now—talking about it but never acting upon it. And I was surprised that this program came up, because everyone was talking about doing something, but never really did nothing until now (Moriarty, 1992).

The quarterback's response represented the cynicism of a community, cynicism developed over decades of systemic racism, economic decline, and civil unrest that resulted in visits from media, prominent politicians, and promises for change that never materialized.

This cynicism was explored as the news broadcast turned to the next discourse topic, the lack of jobs in the community. Giving some students a hidden video camera, the students went to businesses in the community to inquire about potential job openings (Moriarty, 1992). Their search was in vain, as no businesses in the community appeared to be hiring. The students' responses to the lack of the jobs in the community demonstrated a deeper frustration about their situation. One student, Unidentified Teen #6, stated:

Well, I thought they was going to build it up, rebuild all the stores and things... like George Bush and all these other political people came in here, and they were on the TV talking about what they were going to do. Even our own politicians and stuff couldn't do nothing for us (Moriarty, 1992).

The VHS student expressed frustration about how "they," presumably meaning politicians, were supposed to "rebuild" the stores and community. Yet, the job search on this broadcast and the focus on economic decline due to the riots were facades, for the real economic decline in the community was not produced by the Riots of 1992, but rather 10 years earlier as manufacturing companies disinvested in the community due to globalization. These facts, though, never were broached in the broadcast.

As the news broadcast continued, the reporter interviewed Jesse Jackson, who conducted an assembly for students at VHS. The news broadcast showed an image of Jackson addressing the students and asking the students to repeat with him: "Victory is number one" (Moriarty, 1992). When asked by the journalist about student's frustration over the lack of resources being given to improve the community's economic circumstances, Jackson pointed to the students and suggested that they should use "their power" to change the situation (Moriarty, 1992). The topos of burdening or weighing

down that opened the broadcast continued as students, even in the words of this political leader, bore the responsibility for changing the community. Yet, students, as shown in the broadcast, could not even find jobs, let alone change the broader economic circumstances of this community.

In a final interview with students in the news broadcast, the reporter demonstrated how students felt cynical about their situation, but how they felt responsible for enacting change in their community:

MORIARTY: Look, you have Reverend Jesse Jackson, you have a state senator coming to the school. I mean, that's pretty impressive.

Unidentified Teen #7: Yeah, it's impressive if they had something to say.

MORIARTY: Did you hear anything different today than you've been hearing for the past six months?

Teen #7: No, not really, no. No. It's all the same. It's the same propaganda. Everybody just has a different order of putting it.

MORIARTY: What do you guys think this community needs? Just list some of the kinds of things that when you look at it you think the community needs?

Unidentified Teen #8: We need an opportunity to get ahead and to get up on our feet. We need jobs.

Teen #6: I feel we need a leader, or some more leaders, to help us to help bring the people together so that we can help ourselves (Moriarty, 1992).

The last interview portrayed students as cynics, unimpressed by the march of politicians through their community. Yet, rather than conclude there, the reporter pressed the youth to brainstorm a list of what they thought the community needed. The youth obliged and developed a list that included jobs, something that certainly the youth themselves cannot create for the community. But the final teen shown here, offered another solution, for these youth should unite to help themselves. While not underestimating the power of youth agency, the reporter managed to shift the burden of responsibility from larger

societal forces onto the youth who live in this community. The youth in the VHS community were burdened or weighed down with the seemingly difficult task of changing their own economic destiny, while the real agents of change, the White dominant group, were let off the hook, free from the burden of doing anything to help these students of color in South Central Los Angeles.

The broadcast closed as it opened, with the outcome of the football game, a game where VHS played well, but lost. As the journalist concluded, “The real lesson is that sometimes just wanting to win isn’t enough.” The conclusion drawn here is that the community, like the football players, wanted to win but has not worked hard enough to earn the victory. Instead, they remained the losers in the economic, political, and social systems in the United States.

Case study #3 – February 18, 1996. The third case study appeared as an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* Opinion section on February 18, 1996. Entitled “Bilingual Education: Teaching It Faster and Smarter,” the article addressed the need to end bilingual education and move to teaching students in English-only classrooms. Within the article, VHS was mentioned as an example of a place where bilingual education occurred. Given the editorial genre, no specific author was cited and the viewpoint expressed must be the viewpoint of the *Times* editorial board. The discursive strategies presented within the article include nomination strategies, predications strategies, and dichotomies.

From the outset, the article clearly painted a dichotomy between English-speaking children and non-English speaking children:

A number of Latino parents have pulled their children out of the Ninth Street School because they want them to learn English. Now. Not next year or the year 2000. And not in classes taught mainly

in Spanish. Their boycott has focused more attention on a growing political debate over bilingual education: how best to teach students who do not speak fluent English when they enroll in school (Editorial, 1996).

The opening paragraph clearly distinguished that English is much more important than Latino students' home language of Spanish. The emphasis placed on learning English "now" appended a discourse that Latino immigrants should assimilate into American culture as rapidly as possible, and, in the process lose the language of their home culture. A topos of culture appeared at the start of this article, one that blamed Latino immigrants for not learning English fast enough, but that offered a chance for redemption through the alignment of interests aimed at ending bilingual education. Naturally, this topos of culture aligned to a long-standing tradition of discrimination against immigrant groups within the United States, one that has had deleterious effects for immigrant groups, many of whom continued to face discrimination despite assimilating into American culture (Zinn, 2001).

Within this dichotomy, the editorial posited parents of non-English speaking students as desirous of a "faster" and "smarter" way for their students to learn English. Interest convergence (Bell, 1995) occurred as the Latino immigrant parents' boycott of Ninth Street elementary school aligned to the *Times* editorial staff's viewpoint that bilingual education should be stopped. By hiding behind the parent's boycott, the editorial was able to present the parents as responsible for changing the system and the *Times* editorial staff's viewpoint as simply supportive of the parents. In this way, the editorial adopted a topos of burdening or weighing down, giving these parents the responsibility to act to advance their students in American society. Really, this topos obfuscated the anti-immigrant, conservative interests of the editorial.

The article offered little background on the situation. Within the LAUSD, students are taught in “their first language and gradually” (Editorial, 1996) provided instruction in English. The bilingual program in Los Angeles Unified School district was “nationally acclaimed, but some parents complain the transition to English is too slow and their children are stuck for years in bilingual education” (Editorial, 1996). The reasons for the program being “nationally acclaimed” were omitted. The editorial cited that students learning English would do best in “dual immersion classes, in which two languages are used equally for English-speaking and non-English-speaking children, who learn from each other in the same classroom” (Editorial, 1996). Yet, these programs are “expensive and thus rare” (Editorial, 1996), meaning that the economic and political circumstances in the United States did not want to do what is best for children learning English, but only what was cheapest. In contrast to the dual immersion approach, the editorial offered the “English immersion method,” which enables students to “learn English quickly” (Editorial, 1996).

While the editorial clearly supported this faster, cheaper approach, it did acknowledge:

This sink-or-swim method doomed many Latino students before Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, which prohibits discrimination based on the limited ability of a student to use English, and before the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled in 1974 that depriving non-English-speaking children of special help in learning English could violate their civil rights (Editorial, 1996).

The editorial’s inclusion of these facts correctly linked bilingual education to the history of civil rights, and demonstrated how the courts upheld decisions to ensure that non-English-speaking children would not face discrimination. Yet, the editorial dispensed with these historical legal decisions and instead determined that bilingual education,

especially within the Los Angeles Unified School District, where the programs are “uneven” and vary “dramatically from campus to campus” (Editorial, 1996), should be eliminated in favor of an English-immersion approach. Thus the *Times* editorial ignored historical legal precedents and research that showed the effectiveness of bilingual education in order to argue for a shift towards a program that could discriminate against non-English speaking students. By discounting the expertise of educators and court decisions, the text placed polarized educators and civil rights advocates on one side, and with Latino parents and the editorial authors on the other, while the children, who stood to be impacted most by the change were metaphorically positioned between these two groups.

The editorial did address the reasons why this debate has been brought up at this time. According to the article, “Sacramento is poised to address the controversy. Several bills are pending before the Assembly” (Editorial, 1996). Personification appeared here in order to humanize the process of creating legislation. The rationale for needing to humanize such a seemingly difficult, labyrinthine process appeared close to the admission: “The issue reaches across California, which has 1.2 million students with limited English ability, and schools spend \$400 million on them each year” (Editorial, 1996). A topos of numbers was offered in an effort to establish again the urgency of dealing with these non-English speaking students. The cost associated with educating these non-English speaking students rose to the top, justifying a need to address the situation, and clearly, as the article argued, improve it.

Continuing with the topos of numbers, the article provided a barrage of numbers about the number of students in LAUSD that fit into the limited-English category.

According to the article:

Nearly half of the 649,000 students enrolled in the L.A. Unified School District fall into the limited-English category. Most speak Spanish, although about 9% speak one of the more than 80 other languages found in the district. A high transiency rate among students, a high illiteracy rate among some parents and widespread poverty pose additional educational challenges (Editorial, 1996).

Since these statistics followed the discussion about the high cost of educating non-English speaking students in California, the editorial authors seemed to be pointing to the fact that the residents of Los Angeles had to pay for a large percentage of these students within their own city. Yet, the specificity of the topos of numbers in the district faded when the editorial authors turned toward transiency, parental education, and poverty, factors that certainly can be situated within the economic circumstances in the United States. The lack of specificity paints these limited-English students with a wide brush, portraying them as children of very poor, uneducated parents who move frequently.

When the article turned toward the “long-term academic achievement” (Editorial, 1996) of students in bilingual education, VHS entered the article:

At [Victory] High School in South-Central Los Angeles, some recent teenage immigrants make the transition to English before finishing school. Exiting the limited-English classification requires passing a written test at grade level, even though English-only students routinely perform below grade level on the same campus (Editorial, 1996).

Although the involvement in the article is brief, VHS in one paragraph was celebrated for its bilingual program and in another vilified for its inability to have its English-only students pass the state grade level exams. What the text failed to mention is the English-only students were not White, but rather African American, another minority group that experienced marginalization for being non-standard English speakers. Within the

editorial, VHS functioned as a symbol of how bilingual education corresponded to failure for even English-only students.

As the article drew to a close, it pointed to how the federal government “subsidizes bilingual education,” but how its “commitment is waning even as demand is soaring” (Editorial, 1996). The editorial denied an opportunity to explore why this commitment was waning, to perhaps expose the anti-immigrant sentiments that dominated the middle 1990s (Garcia, 1995).

Instead, the editorial offered that these Latino parents were linked to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s:

Ironically, the parents boycotting the Ninth Street School are using a civil rights tactic to challenge a form of bilingual education which itself is protected as a civil right—equal access to public education. The parents are right in one sense—their children need to learn English as soon as possible (Editorial, 1996).

The use of the term “ironically” operated to illustrate again the article’s pitting of Latino immigrants against African Americans, as the Latino parents seemed to be the continuing a tradition of fighting for civil rights. Yet, truly, the parents’ boycott, which converged with conservative, anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States, sought to roll back gains from the civil rights movement. Again, interests converged as the authors’ hid their own interests, to end bilingual education, behind a cloak of Latino parents and the Civil Rights movement.

Case study #4 – July 14, 2002. Serving as the fourth case study, the article entitled “A School Flails in a Sea of Chaos” appeared on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* on July 14, 2002. The sub-headline was as follows: “Education: Abysmal test scores at Los Angeles campus draw state SWAT team, which faces daunting odds”

(Colvin, 2002). As the sub-headline indicated, the low-test scores at VHS prompted review by a state audit team. The reporter, Richard Lee Colvin, chronicled the visit of a state audit team to VHS and the subsequent follow-up visit a year later. The article's title contained a metaphor comparing the school to a drowning victim. An additional metaphor, though, followed the first, as the sub-headline compares the state audit team to a "SWAT team," an entity that usually intervenes when policing of severe crises is necessary. In addition to metaphors, the article featured nominative strategies, discursive strategies, and a topos of numbers in order to illustrate how the school is failing its students and families.

To open the text, the journalist profiled a parent and her son who were unhappy with the school and seeking a way to exit it:

Dolores Torres, a 40-year-old bank teller, sat among about 150 parents in the auditorium of [Victory] High School, desperate to ask the man from the state about her son.

The boy sitting next to her, 15-year-old Ray Torres, dreamed of going to college and becoming a computer programmer. But he was stuck in this floundering Los Angeles high school, where most students don't even reach their senior year, let alone collect a diploma. Test scores had been so consistently abysmal that the state sent a "SWAT" team of auditors to figure out what, if anything, could be done to raise them.

On this November night, the state's chief emissary, Gordon Jackson, stood at the front of the room, listening as parent after parent rose to complain: Why wasn't this school giving them homework? Why wasn't it teaching them to read? Where were all the books (Colvin, 2002)?

From the outset, the article crafted a narrative containing three main characters, Dolores, a mother, Ray, her son, and Gordon Jackson, the head of the state audit team, Gordon Jackson. These stories served as the backbone of the piece, which constructed a bleak portrait of VHS, one that even at the beginning, seemingly doomed to never improve. The fact that this audit was characterized as similar to a police action imposed an authoritarian overtone about the audit, a tone that seemed to punish the school and its

members. Yet, this one auditor became a symbol of reform, the one person who had the authority to transform VHS into a more successful place. His presence within a state agency remained hidden, as was the fact that he was only one representative, in many ways, powerless to do much to change the circumstances impacting the school. Nonetheless, this auditor, Jackson, who was profiled at length in the story, became a character foil for Ray, the boy who sought to escape VHS.

Even from the beginning, little clarity was offered about what triggered the state audit and what the goals of the audit were. Vague language was offered as explanation for the situation:

Over the next 18 months, [Jackson] explained, the auditors would negotiate a road map for improvement with Los Angeles Unified. After that, if scores didn't rise enough, the state might try to run the school directly or impose other sanctions.

The state prompted partly by federal pressure to turn around failing schools, had never involved itself so intimately in the affairs of individual campuses. Already, though, Jackson could see that everyone associated with [Victory] wanted—and needed—far more than his team was offering (Colvin, 2002).

The causes of the audit were obfuscated, cloaked by inchoate language about “federal pressure” (Colvin, 2002). Later in the article, Colvin (2002) returned to this federal pressure by writing, “In a nation whose president has vowed to ‘leave no child behind,’ [Victory] High is filled with students who have been left, or soon will be (Colvin, 2002). Although left unnamed, the reference was to the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), and VHS became a symbol of the type of school the law was enacted to fix. Unfortunately, what VHS needed, as the reporter indicated, was something that Jackson and his audit team could not provide.

Among the reasons cited for the state audit was a topos of numbers based on quantitative data. In the article, VHS was described as a “dropout factor[y],” one of “300 or so high schools nationally that Robert Balfanz, a Johns Hopkins University education researcher” studied for having high dropout rates (Colvin, 2002). What follows after it was a topos of numbers meant to demonstrate the school’s low performance:

The school ranks in the lowest decile on the state’s academic performance index. About 80% of the almost entirely Latino and black student body comes from what the state refers to as socio-economically disadvantaged. Most are poor; many aren’t proficient in English; most of their parents haven’t graduated from high school.

Causes for these numbers were only hinted at as students were described as poor, non-English speakers who came from uneducated families. As students were labeled, a topos of culture emerged, magnifying the deficits of students and their families.

Without a doubt, a bleak picture of VHS emerged from the article. In a variety of vignettes, the reporter wrote about students in a remedial reading class, students out ditching class, and students failing to answer simple questions about multiplication in math class. The teachers fared no better, as they were portrayed as inept and as watering down the curriculum. Even the school’s principal admitted that she was unprepared for this job and that she didn’t even know all of the teachers’ names. A seemingly normalized culture of low expectations, from students to administrators, emerged to further paint VHS students as unmotivated, VHS teachers as uncaring, and VHS administrators as incompetent. Little doubt should be left in the reader’s mind—VHS’s culture was broken and in need of repair.

While the pitiful story of VHS played out, the state auditor Jackson arose as heroic:

Jackson, who is African American, grew up in Los Angeles' Crenshaw Village apartments—known as 'the Jungle.' But he had arranged to travel across the city, by bus, to attend largely white Fairfax High on the Westside. There he had run track, acted in plays, grabbed every chance to learn something new.

[Victory] seemed to be doing the opposite of what Fairfax did for him—shrinking students opportunities and aspirations (Colvin, 2002).

Jackson was portrayed as seizing educational opportunities, eschewing attending school near his home in South Central Los Angeles, and instead selecting to be “bused” to a “largely white” campus on the city’s “Westside” (Colvin, 2002). Jackson was a product of desegregation efforts that emerged from the Civil Rights movement. He was a student who benefitted from a busing program meant to encourage students to integrate. Yet, as a state auditor at VHS, a school composed of only students of color, Jackson found a legacy of unequal education, poverty, and segregation. While the reporter rewarded Jackson’s work ethic and Horatio Algiers’ type of story, the community of VHS was diminished for its deficits, some of which included poverty, segregation, and low-performing schools. The text emphasized individual determination and work ethic, while suggesting that VHS students were doomed unless they found a way out of the school.

As the story began to conclude, the reporter captured a vignette about the conclusion of Jackson’s visit and his subsequent presentation to the staff:

On the Friday of the auditors’ first week, they assembled in the school auditorium, eager to hear Jackson’s preliminary findings.

He captured them on slides, eight in all, which he projected on a screen: The reading program was ‘fragmented.’ Teachers expected little of students. Teaching practices were misguided. The school’s administration was “overwhelmed” and ineffective.

When he finished, the crowd didn’t stir. They seemed stunned to see, summed up neatly in black and white, the problems that had weighed them down so long.

‘Would it be wrong for us to anticipate broad, systemic change at [Victory] High?’ a social studies teacher finally asked.

Jackson said it would not, and the staff burst into applause (Colvin, 2002).

When Jackson presented his findings to the staff, outbursts of applause greeted him. Teachers appeared hopeful and desirous that reforms occur. Rather than balk or fight back, the teachers appeared as jubilant to finally experience change.

Yet, this jubilation was withdrawn within a few months of Jackson's visit, when according to the reporter VHS developed a plan, but many of the faculty members felt the plan to be "weak and little different from those tried before" (Colvin, 2002). When Jackson returned, almost a year later, VHS "was found to be 'progressing satisfactorily' in its improvement of teaching practices" (Colvin, 2002). However, Jackson encountered a campus that still continued to have "firecrackers" set off in the hallway, "disillusioned" teachers who had "balked" and protested a recent reform to move to block scheduling, and "[b]ands of youngsters continued to wander campus during class time" (Colvin, 2002). The hopeless picture that opened the article remained fixed in place at the end of the article.

The student, Ray, and his mother, Delores, escaped VHS, managing to earn Ray a spot at a high school in a suburb near Los Angeles. Like Jackson, Ray earned an opportunity out of South Central Los Angeles to a more affluent, White community. He, like Jackson, most certainly avoided a bleak future, the text suggested, but for other students left behind at VHS the story remained not so cheerful, as indeed the metaphor in the title appeared to win out—the school seemed to drown in a "sea" of chaos and even state auditors were unable to rescue it.

Case study #5 – June 29, 2006. The fifth case study was an article entitled “A Path from a ‘Dropout Factory’ to UC Berkeley,” which was written by Sandy Banks and which appeared in the California/Metro section of the *Los Angeles Times*. The article’s central discursive feature appeared in the title, a metaphor comparing the school to a factory for high school dropouts. In the previous case study, Colvin (2002) utilized the same metaphor and explained the origin of the metaphor from a national study on schools with the highest dropout rates. Thus, the Banks (2006) article continued the discourse about VHS that began in the previous case study.

In this particular article, Banks (2006) offered an in-depth portrayal of VHS’s valedictorian, Luz Elena, who would be attending UC Berkeley in the fall. Through interviews, Banks (2006) constructed a narrative about Luz Elena overcoming numerous obstacles, including uncaring teachers, unmotivated peers, and poverty, in order to achieve academic success. Throughout, the article deployed various nominative strategies, predicative strategies, metaphors, and the topoi of numbers, culture and burdening or weighing down.

The article opened with a lead paragraph that constructed a metaphor that would appear throughout the text:

For senior Luz Elena Gutierrez, that path wound through hallways crowded with dispirited peers, around inexperienced teachers and veterans disillusioned by experience, over economic obstacles seldom faced by middle-class children, to the spotlight on stage at tonight’s graduation as [Victory]’s valedictorian for the Class of 2006.

Almost 500 students will cross the stage with her. But more than 100 of them will receive a certificate of completion instead of a diploma; they had the grades to graduate but could not pass the state exit exam. And 1,500 of her freshman classmates will not be present; they left [Victory] during the four years leading to graduation (Banks, 2006).

In the opening paragraph several descriptive dichotomies were established as controlling features for the entire article. First, Luz Elena was contrasted with her “dispirited peers,” who care little about their education. Second “inexperienced teachers” are contrasted with “veterans disillusioned by experience,” establishing a hierarchy among teachers that positioned veterans at the bottom with newer teachers above them. Third, Luz, who came from a working class family, was contrasted with “middle-class children,” a dichotomy which upholds class difference within the United States.

In the second paragraph a fourth dichotomy was established, that of the individual versus the collective. Luz’s success was celebrated, yet many of her classmates did not share her success. A topos of numbers was presented to illustrate how unique Luz Elena’s success is at this particular “dropout factory” (Banks, 2006). Among her classmates, Luz Elena managed to pass the state high school exit exam, a new requirement for graduation. This fact situated this article in a larger statewide discourse about the use of the high school exit exam, a discourse that has been contentious and litigious (EdSource, 2006). In addition, Luz’s success contrasted the “1,500 of her freshman classmates” (Banks, 2006) who left VHS before graduating. The term “left” was used kindly, for the article’s title already labeled these students as “dropouts.”

Among the reasons students drop out at VHS, the reporter offered a topos of a culture of low expectations. According to the article:

‘People have low expectations when you come from [Victory],’ said Luz Elena, 18. ‘Inner-city school. Low-income kid. Immigrant family. They don’t expect us to succeed. But look at me, where I am now. So anything is possible.’ Possible, maybe. But hardly easy.

Luz Elena demonstrated an awareness of stereotypes about her community. She celebrated her success as proof of beating the odds. Yet, the reporter refused to permit

this celebration to last, and instead chose to undercut it by acknowledging that academic success at VHS was “hardly easy” (Banks, 2006). Luz Elena emerged not as a symbol that change could occur at VHS, but instead as an anomaly. Luz became symbolic of not only a strong work ethic, but also an underdog who beats the odds through persistence and determination. Along the way of course she made sacrifices, such as foregoing a “social life” and choosing her “friends as carefully as she picked her courses” (Banks, 2006). The topos of burdening down is revealed here as an argument is offered that despite the burdens placed upon her by her school and community, Luz acted and in doing so reaped the reward of a high school diploma and a college scholarship.

Indeed this image was reinforced as the journalist turned to portray Luz Elena’s family. According to the article, Luz Elena’s parents, who “emigrated from Mexico,” “never went past elementary school and never learned to speak English” (Banks, 2006). Both of her parents work at a hospital doing laundry, but her parents work different hours, one during the day and the other at night, so “one parent can always be at home” (Banks, 2006). Despite the challenges, Luz Elena’s parents always encouraged her. A short anecdote of Luz talking with her father while staying up late to study was offered through both Spanish and English translation:

‘Every night I can remember, my father would come in from work so tired, and he’d come into my bedroom, where I was bent over my desk doing homework and say the same thing:

Hija, tu si puedes hacer alguien en la vida. Estudia porque yo se que tu si puedes. Ve me a mi; tu no quieres sufrir como yo.

Daughter of mine, you can be someone in life. Study hard because I know you can do it. Look at me; you don’t want to suffer like me.’

The moving moment framed a dichotomy between becoming “someone in life” by receiving an education and suffering by having to work a low paying job. The dichotomy reinforced a narrative frame of school as a pathway to achieving the American Dream and refused to challenge a capitalistic system, which divided a family daily so that they could make ends meet.

While the moment is poignant and seemed to offer a positive view of the sacrifices families in the VHS community make for their children, the moment was undercut by a return to the campus and an exploration of the reasons more students do not go to college. Among the reasons cited was that many VHS students were undocumented immigrants, who could not enroll in college or receive financial aid to attend colleges. As a result, the reporter wrote, “So counselors become surrogate parents—nagging, cajoling, encouraging, scolding; reading drafts of college essays; reminding procrastinators about SAT deadlines; working the phones to find scholarships that don’t require Social Security numbers” (Banks, 2006). VHS counselors are framed as becoming “surrogate parents” a nominative strategy that signaled the deficiencies of parents in the community. In essence, the journalist was attempting to portray the social and cultural capital that school staff can help mobilize for students, but the effort was shoddy and instead undercut the contributions of Luz’s parents that had previously been portrayed. Of note, the journalist elected not to include any teacher voices in the article, instead allowing her words, such as “inexperienced” and “disillusioned” to paint a portrait of an inept, unmotivated teaching staff.

The article concluded with a turn back towards the topos of burden, which served to assuage reader's worries that society is not aiding VHS students. According to the article "a phalanx of university and community programs" were offered to VHS students. As proof, the journalist offered Luz's scholarship from UC Berkeley, which she earned through an outreach program and one of Luz's friends, Diana, who participated in an Upward Bound program. These points served to reassure readers that society, here represented by universities, was doing all that it could help VHS students. The article seemed to suggest that the system of higher education was indeed open to these Latinas and was doing all that it could insure their success, even when VHS itself was not.

Beyond this assistance, the article concluded with Luz herself stating that the way to change people's beliefs about VHS was to "continue our education, and then come back and help the community" (Banks, 2006). Luz's quote aligned to the vision of education as the pathway to the American Dream. Rather than point out to readers or representatives of a system, Luz's comment pointed toward herself as she became the agent bearing the responsibility for "changing" her school and community. With students such as Luz, there became no need for further systemic or social action, for doubtless she could succeed in repairing the problems of this urban school and community.

Case study #6 – December 11, 2009. The sixth case study was an article entitled "Cortines unveils plans to dismantle and rebuild Victory High" which was written by Howard Blume and which was published on December 11, 2009 in the on-line version of the *Los Angeles Times*. A similar article appeared the next day in the print version of the newspaper. Important to note, the article's title opened with a metaphor about rebuilding,

one that would recur throughout the article. In addition to metaphor, other discursive strategies used in this article included nomination strategies, predication strategies, and framing. The topoi that appear in this article were topoi of burden and topoi of numbers.

The article's opening lead returned to the metaphor established with the article's title: "L.A.'s top school official on Thursday unveiled his plan to shut down [Victory] High and start over from scratch—a move denounced by the teachers union but applauded by city leaders and the nation's Secretary of Education" (Blume, 2009). The lead paragraph, like the title, offered an image of destruction and rebuilding, a dichotomy that would be deployed throughout the article. The characters in this narrative appeared polarized from the start; on one hand the "city leaders" and "nation's Secretary of Education" supported the decision, while on the other hand the "teachers union" did not. The heroes and villains of this narrative emerged immediately without even any rationale for such distinctions.

One might expect that the second paragraph of this article would provide the rationale for the Superintendent's decision, yet the reporter chose instead to provide another piece of news: "After quietly alerting the [Victory] staff Wednesday afternoon, Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines spoke separately with students, parents, city leaders and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who was in town to promote such school turnarounds" (Blume, 2009). The second paragraph clearly demonstrated that the reconstitution of VHS aligned with federal education policy as represented by Secretary of Education Duncan, who enacted reconstitutions during his tenure as an official in the Chicago public schools. According to the article:

In Chicago—where Duncan served as superintendent—restitutions were neither uniformly successful nor easy to replicate, said Dorothy Shippy, an associate education professor at the City University of New York.

In an interview, Duncan said that Chicago gradually learned from its experiences in turnarounds. The effort requires substantial advance planning and a complete, wide-ranging revamp of school culture and resources as well as an influx of teaching and administrative talent, he said (Blume, 2009).

The professor offered a critique of the reconstitution process, while the admittance from Duncan acknowledged the difficulty of conducting a successful “turnaround.” Certainly these seemed like heady undertakings, yet despite the challenges, Duncan was cited as calling for many restitutions to occur: “He said he wants to see 1,000 turnarounds every year, targeting the lowest 1% of schools nationwide. The Obama administration is supporting that effort with \$3.5 billion in school-improvement grants” (Blume, 2009). In a time of economic crisis, the grants loomed large for districts strapped for cash, yet the reporter denied an explanation of the possibility that this policy of linking restitutions to grant money could lead to quick decisions to reconstitute, which would contradict Duncan’s own admittance of the need for “substantial advance planning” (Blume, 2009) prior to conducting a reconstitution.

The article instead featured Duncan’s celebration of the LAUSD superintendent for the “commitment, the sense of urgency, and the lack of complacency or acceptance of the status quo” (Blume, 2009). No definition of the status quo is offered here, for the reader has not even heard the reasons why VHS was chosen for reconstitution. Instead, the status quo was left as an unexplained term, standing as a signifier for all that is wrong at VHS. Naturally, the term “status quo” became contrasted to school reconstitution,

which apparently, despite even Duncan's admittance of its complexities, must be the best path to improve the presumed educational crisis at VHS.

A mere four paragraphs from the end of the article, the reasons for reconstituting VHS appeared:

At [Victory], distressed students refused to go to class during an afternoon sit-in. 'Why do you say [Victory] High is a bad school?' senior [Cristal] asked during Cortines' visit.

'The data shows the school is not successful academically,' Cortines responded.

Only 1.5% of students are proficient in math 13.9% are proficient in English. Talking to parents, Cortines also laid out plans for accelerating what students learn before getting to [Victory]. He talked of shared accountability that would include imposing a dress code.

'I don't want the pants hanging down around the ass of the young men on this campus and I don't want the midriff showing,' he said as some parents nodded their approval.

Parent Naomi Haywood said she was hopeful.

'Everything he's saying,' she said, 'we've been screaming from the lungs at the school district for the past 20 years' (Blume, 2009).

The decision upset students at the campus who conducted an "afternoon sit-in" to protest the superintendent's decision. A student, Cristal, posed a question, one that exposed her feeling that the decision amounted to a value judgment about the school, and presumably by extension, the students that attended school there. In response to the student's question, the superintendent was quoted as offering a topos of numbers, one that privileged the quantitative, objective numbers over the impassioned pleas of the students.

Yet, he also revealed that the decision to reconstitute the school went beyond the numbers, offering a topos of culture, which clearly vilified the students' culture.

According to the superintendent, the students' culture, described in the form of their dress, was in arrears, a threat to the district and to society, but now with the reconstitution it would be remedied. The vulgar use of "ass" stood out in the article, not only because

the Superintendent was quoted saying it, but also because the journalist chose to include it. Although no further explanation was provided, the word choice here signaled the possibility of a greater conflict occurring between the school district and the school campus that could be better framed through an exploration of beliefs about students' social values, school district policy, and even an understanding of racism's reliance upon physical features as descriptors. The students' bodies, along with their educable minds, functioned as contested spaces for the school, district, and even the nation.

Additionally, the Superintendent's call for "shared accountability" (Blume, 2009) contrasted with the announcement that a dress code would be imposed. The contradiction appeared to continue as the concluding paragraph described a parent who exposed how calls for reform went unheeded by the school district. The conclusion of the article illustrated how, like the student who asked the questions, the voices of community members were dismissed by widely held perceptions about the school and community.

Formulation of a Critique

In step 7 of the DHA, Reisigl and Wodak (2009) suggested the researcher should offer a critique that illuminated biases hidden with the text and related the discourse to power structures. Given that this research project also included interviews with alumni, teachers, and community elders from VHS, the findings from these interviews will be presented first. The critique of the news coverage and its relationships to participants' findings will be presented in Chapter 5 of this study.

The Process: Interviews

Individual Interviews

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and a nomination process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To begin, teacher participants were chosen based on the criterion that they worked at Victory High School for a minimum of five years during the period of time being studied, 1990-2010. Using convenience sampling, I selected teacher participants that fit this criterion and that I had the capability to contact via phone or email. I then generated a list of potential teacher participants.

To begin the individual interview portion of the study, I contacted teacher participants outside of working hours via phone and Internet. Out of the four teachers selected, I was unable to connect with one teacher, prompting the need for an additional teacher participant.

The individuals who became the teacher participants were as follows: Adriana, who taught at VHS for 14 years; Carl who taught at VHS for 16 years; Jesse, who taught at VHS for 10 years; and Silvia, who taught at VHS for 25 years.

I arranged individual meetings with the four teacher participants. Locations for meetings varied from participants' homes to restaurants and coffee shops of their selection. Upon meeting with participants for the first time, I provided all IRB documents and carefully reviewed the requirements for participation in the study. Participants signed Informed Consent forms and received a copy of the form for their records.

To document interviews, I utilized two audio recording devices to ensure accuracy of recordings. Although I began each interview with a prepared list of

questions, often the conversation veered away from the questions. I found that participants felt comfortable with me and hence were willing to answer follow-up questions, provide additional details, and delve difficult topics. My emic status (Hatch, 2002) enabled a richer, fuller interview to occur.

At the conclusion of each interview, I asked teacher participants to nominate alumni or community elders to be interviewed. All four teachers nominated community elders readily, often nominating the same individual over and over. However, the four teacher participants struggled with nominating alumni due to the fact that they did not have contact information, such as a telephone number, for alumni. Nonetheless, names of nominated alumni were noted.

Since the teacher participants readily nominated community elders, I next interviewed these individuals. All four teacher participants nominated Hugo, a community elder who had taught at VHS for 45 years. Three out of four participants nominated Melissa, a community elder who taught at VHS for 27 years. Two out of four participants nominated Rhea, a community elder who taught at VHS for 42 years. Two out of four participants nominated another community elder, Mr. Grant (a pseudonym) who attended VHS in the 1960s and began teaching there in the 1970s. Efforts to contact Mr. Grant and to arrange an interview did not materialize. One out of four participants nominated Joyce, who taught at VHS for 37 years. All told, Hugo, Melissa, Rhea and Joyce became the four community elder participants.

Similar to teacher participants, interviews with community elders took place at participants' homes or at a location of their choice. Also, participants felt very

comfortable sharing their narratives about VHS with me, often answering all pre-prepared questions as well as additional follow-up questions. Admittedly, interviews with community elders surpassed the one-hour mark, in most cases occupying at least two or three hours. In one instance, the interview occurred over the duration of half a day, as I assisted Rhea in making food for her family before we engaged in the interview. In another instance, the case of Hugo, artifacts accompanied the interview, drawing out the length of the interview but certainly enriching and enhancing the experience of the interview. Similar to the teacher participants, when asked to nominate alumni, community elder participants could produce names but not phone numbers or email addresses for alumni.

Alumni participants were drawn from nominations from both community elder and teacher participants. One teacher participant, Silvia, nominated Gabriel, who attended VHS from 1989 to 1993, because she was his typing instructor. One community elder, Hugo, nominated Penny, who attended VHS from 2006 to 2010, because she had been his math student for several years. One community elder, Rhea, nominated Beatriz, whom she had taught in the Humanitas program over the years 1999 to 2003. After a follow-up conversation with Jesse, regarding nominations for alumni participants, he remembered Troy, who attended VHS from 2005 to 2009. Beatriz, Gabriel, Penny, and Troy became the alumni participants.

Efforts to ensure that participants came from a variety of time frames of attendance at VHS were made. However, some nominations for alumni participants were unsuccessful, as alumni had moved out of the area, were attending college outside of the

area, and/or unresponsive to email or phone requests. Interviews with alumni participants were conducted at a location of their choosing, including one participant's home, one participant's college campus, one participant's workplace, and a coffee shop near one participant's home. Similarly, interviews with alumni participants were rich and deep, as participants provided numerous details about their experiences at VHS and about their current experiences as students and professionals.

Focus Group Interviews

In addition to individual interviews, I held two focus group interviews for participants. Participants were notified of the date and time of the focus group and invited to attend. Two participants attended the first focus group interview, which took place at one of the participants' homes, and two participants attended the second focus group interview, which took place at my home. Questions were prepared in advance of the focus group interviews. Yet, often participants went away from questions and spoke more freely about their experiences at and opinions on VHS and the surrounding community.

Follow-up Interviews

Finally, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants as the data analysis process occurred. I connected with participants and I furnished him or her with a copy of their interview transcript. In addition, I conducted follow-up interviews to insure that all details were clear. In one instance with an alumni participant, I conducted a follow-up interview with her while she was home from college and visiting her family. In another instance, I connected with a participant in an effort to clarify certain dates and times he mentioned in his original interview.

Additional Research Efforts

In an effort to gain access to texts or experiences that would help to increase the credibility of this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), I also attended several other events and engaged in other activities. For example, Hugo invited me to the 1980 VHS class reunion at a hotel near the airport. I spent five hours meeting alumni from the class of 1980 and listening to Hugo and alumni share stories of their experiences at VHS.

In addition, I attended reunions for VHS faculty and staff, even hosting a reunion at my home. While these reunions were informal and social, they offered an opportunity to listen to different individuals' stories about working at VHS. Some participants from this study did attend these social events; however no audio recording took place. Instead, I took notes at the end of each reunion in an effort to capture not only the stories shared, but also my feelings on experiencing these reunions.

Also, I attended several community meetings in the neighborhood around VHS. These meetings focused on efforts to open a new high school near VHS and featured numerous alumni, community members, and current and former faculty members. Interviews were not conducted at these events, instead I observed and took notes at the conclusion of each meeting. Additionally, I visited numerous websites, one of which featured VHS history and pictures and was operated by alumni groups and one of which was started by teachers in response to the Reconstitution in 2010 and now serves as a record of those efforts.

Throughout the study, I visited numerous websites, one of which featured VHS history and pictures and was created by a group of alumni. Another website I frequented

was started by teacher participant Carl in response to the Reconstitution in 2010 and now serves as a record of those efforts. Additionally, I maintained a presence on at least two email lists started by VHS teachers that began in 2010 during the Reconstitution efforts and continues to update members about events at VHS, local school district policy and even educational policies being enacted around the nation.

The Participants

In this section, I provide background biographical sketches of all participants. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in order to protect their privacy and to adhere to the guidelines prescribed by the Loyola Marymount University IRB. Participants were grouped by the category in which they were selected or nominated to participate in this research project. These categories include a) Teacher Participants, b) Community Elder Participants, and c) Alumni Participants.

Teacher Participants

Adriana. Adriana, 52 years old, was born and raised in Europe. After starting a career teaching high school in Spain, she decided she wanted to learn about the education system in the United States. As she says, after five years of teaching, she “thought that maybe going to another place, another country” would “motivate” her or “give [her] new ideas.” So, at the age of 30, she immigrated to the United States and settled in Los Angeles.

The transition was difficult for Adriana for a variety of reasons. Among them was encountering race in America. For Adriana, selecting a race in the United States is dependent upon context. At times she identified herself as Latina, while at other times she

identified herself as “Other.” According to her wishes, in this study I refer to Adriana as Latina.

In addition to encountering race in the United States, Adriana had difficulty to adjusting to her teaching assignment, which was at an elementary school teaching sixth grade for the first time ever. Despite having the best students at the school, Adriana felt it was “a very horrible year.” As she recalled, “I thought ‘Well I’m not going to give up just because of this.’”

Two years later, Adriana moved to a middle school in the district where she was working. That school had no bilingual program at all and Adriana helped to start one, doing as she says “everything” – from accumulating a bilingual library to translating at parent meetings. For five years, Adriana helped launch bilingual programs at schools in the district until one year over New Year’s Eve she realized that she “was burned out” and “tired of fighting the same issues,” such as programming students correctly into classes. Adriana returned to her school site and told the principal she would take a leave of absence. She reduced her hours to work 60% of the time and started visiting different schools around Los Angeles with a particular focus on high schools.

She recalled, “I went to places as crazy as Beverly Hills High School and then the following day I went to [Victory], things like that, and I had the interview at [Victory] and I liked the principal very much and I thought that’s the kind of place where I wanted to work.” In July 1996, Adriana began teaching Spanish on B-track. She was one of only two Spanish teachers in the whole school. Together, she and the other teacher started to expand the Advanced Placement offerings for the Spanish department, growing the

number of courses offered on each of the school's three different tracks. In two years, Adriana became chair of the Foreign Languages department. Over the course of her 14 years at the school, the department expanded to include 16 teachers.

In addition to serving as a department chair, Adriana began to assist students, particularly undocumented students, with college planning and applications. Through research, Adriana found different opportunities for undocumented students to continue their education after high school. She began taking some of her undocumented students during the weekend to visit community colleges and apply for classes. Adriana created such a following that eventually she managed to fill an entire bus full of students to visit local community colleges and apply.

From this work with undocumented students, Adriana returned to school and earned a Master's Degree and certificate in counseling. She became one of two college counselors at VHS in the summer of 2007. During her time as a college counselor, she started a club, which aided undocumented students in accessing college, in raising funds to apply to college, and in obtaining scholarships to pay for college. From selling *tortas* to hosting barbeques at her house, Adriana tirelessly worked for undocumented students to have the opportunity and finances to enter and succeed in college. In 2010, two undocumented students whom Adriana worked with earned full scholarships to prestigious colleges.

In the fall of 2010, Adriana left VHS and took a college counseling position at a smaller school.

Carl. Born to Ukrainian immigrants in Canada, Carl, 54 and White, grew up hearing tales of his grandparents who suffered when Russia invaded and took over the Ukraine. His father was forced to join the Russian army and fight. Yet, when his father had the chance he deserted, met up with his wife and daughter and managed to flee to Canada.

Growing up in Canada, Carl experienced discrimination for being Ukrainian, speaking a different language, and practicing a different religion. These experiences of marginalization led him to major in Anthropology in college in California, where his family had moved when he was 14. As he related:

One concept [in Anthropology] is the idea of a ‘marginalized man’ and pardon the sexist way of phrasing that. You have a foot in either culture so you may grow up in the house speaking one language and then in the outside world you’re speaking a different one, translating for your parents. And there’s this whole marginalization from your parent culture.

Raised about 45 minutes outside of Los Angeles in a suburban neighborhood, Carl attended local public schools. He finished high school and enrolled in a local community college. He then transferred to a state college where he studied Anthropology.

From his Anthropology studies and his experience as the son of immigrants, Carl felt called to teach and he found his way to the South Central area, where he taught middle school for seven years. Knowing he was a “misplaced high school teacher,” he waited for his opportunity to transfer to a high school, an opportunity that came in 1994 when VHS opened to accept ninth grade students, increasing its grade span to include grades 9 to 12, and transformed into a year-round campus with three tracks, A, B, and C.

His second year at VHS Carl became a teacher in the Humanitas program, in which the same group of teachers co-planned history, English, and art lessons to deliver

to cohorts of students enrolled in the program. Carl remained a member of the Humanitas program throughout his stay at VHS.

In addition to interdisciplinary collaboration, Carl uses historical reenactment to engage and educate students. He makes historically accurate costumes and props that relate to units in his world history curriculum. It was not uncommon to see Carl walk around campus wearing a Roman Centurion costume or a Viking costume. He documented his costumes through pictures and a website he maintained, and each new school year he added at least one additional costume to grow his collection and to enhance his instructional units.

In 2010 when VHS was to be reconstituted, Carl became an active agitator against the reform through his participation in an online blog. Although he chose not to reapply to VHS believing he would not be re-hired, Carl continues to maintain an on-line presence blogging about educational policy in the school district, state and nation. In September 2010, he took a position teaching world history at a different high school.

Jesse. Jesse's parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Born in the United States, Jesse, 35 and Latino, is the eldest son in his family. He has three brothers and two sisters. He grew up in the area near VHS, attending schools neighboring VHS. At that time, Jesse and his family were "the only Latino family for a mile radius." As "the only Latino in the first grade," Jesse was placed in both an ESL program and a honors/gifted program. As he said, "And so, obviously because of the surname it was easier for them to just give me the ESL program... Fought and got into the gifted program along with a couple other of my classmates that mistake had also happened to."

From an early age, Jesse played a mature role in his family. He and his siblings were “latch-key kids” and so he helped to “raise” his siblings. In order to earn money, his family sold used clothing out of their house and received government assistance. As the eldest, Jesse “had to translate for my mother, both conversationally and legal paperwork.” He saw his “mom struggle and come up in a system where she didn’t even know the language” and he watched as she “learned how to drive clandestinely in the middle of streets full of factories.”

Despite the challenges, Jesse was close to his mother, with whom he shared a number of conversations about “national identity and race and what that means.” Although his mother only had a “third grade education,” her ability to “be critical about society and what’s going on around her” was “bestowed upon” Jesse.

Jesse enrolled in high school at the California Academy of Math and Science (CAMS). Located on a college campus, CAMS provided access to “crazy electives” and great resources. His grandmother and aunt lived nearby the school, so Jesse lived there during the week and then returned to live with his family in South Central during the weekends.

Upon graduation from CAMS, Jesse enrolled at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Although his mother struggled with his decision, she ultimately supported him. Jesse’s first year, he struggled academically, and was placed on academic probation his second year. The freedom and rampant substance abuse made Jesse forget “his focus.” Ultimately, his experiences with his family motivated him to improve his grades.

He graduated with a degree in Math and returned to South Central, where he took a job working for Nissan Corporation.

When he returned he realized the toll his absence had taken on his family. His sister had dropped out of high school and had a baby. His brothers were struggling to be successful in school. Yet, with the money he was earning from Nissan he was able to help his family become more financially stable. He began volunteering as a tutor and then one day he decided to visit VHS to observe classes. After his visit, he decided to become a teacher. He interviewed at numerous high schools, deciding that he wanted to “give back to his community” and teach at VHS, where his brother was attending high school and where his sister would attend as well.

Even in his first year, Jesse became an outspoken advocate for students. In his second year, he asked for and received the opportunity to teach an Advanced Placement course. He began to be active in the teacher’s union and the School Site Council. He worked with students from a local community organization in efforts to organize around the de-militarization of school campuses and the implementation of A-G requirements as high school graduation requirements. Jesse even provided a deposition for the *Eliezer Williams, et al., vs. State of California, et al.*, which became known as the *Williams* case, a lawsuit brought by the ACLU against the state of California over the poor conditions of schools in inner cities in California.

For five of his 10 years at VHS, Jesse taught in the school’s Magnet program. In the fall of 2010, Jesse left VHS to take a teaching position at a different school.

Silvia. Silvia, 60 and African American, was born and raised in Los Angeles. Her father owned his own trucking business and her mother, a graduate of UCLA, stayed at home. At the age of 13, Silvia and her parents moved to an area she described as “very affluent.” As she said, “So, it was all white, and they used to call it Pill Hill because there were so many doctors – the few blacks that were there, most of them were doctors.”

Silvia attended private Catholic schools throughout her life. She and her family traveled, cultivating a passion that remains until today. Upon graduation from high school, Silvia attended a local state university and earned a Bachelor’s degree in business education. She married and had one son.

In 1977, she began teaching typing at [Montgomery] middle school, just a few miles south of VHS. During her seven years at [Montgomery], Silvia became involved in sponsoring a number of organizations, including being the 9th grade sponsor. She related organizing and chaperoning numerous trips to skating rinks, the beach, and other locations.

As time passed, Silvia became interested in moving on to “a higher level” and she interviewed at a number of high schools in the area, including VHS. Accepted to work at VHS in 1984, Silvia began teaching in the business department, which she felt offered students a lot of choices:

When I came to [Victory], I was teaching typing and a little shorthand... And not only did we have typing and shorthand in the business department, we had accounting, business law, business English, business math, business organization and finance, office machines. There probably were about 15 different classes.

Although she did not sponsor any clubs during her time at VHS, she was voted the Teacher of the Year in 2000, winning a laptop computer at the awards dinner. The advent

of computers changed Silvia's work, as she transferred her skills to teaching computer classes, which she taught until 2009 when she retired after 25 years of teaching at VHS and 32 years in LAUSD.

Since her retirement, she has created a wall of honor in her house, showcasing numerous accolades and awards that she earned over her career as a teacher. In addition, she has traveled around the world with many of her friends. She visits her son, who is a doctor, regularly in England. She passes her time on the computer using Facebook and also designing greeting cards for friends and family. She recently finished some real estate courses.

Community Elder Participants

Hugo. Hugo, 68 and White, was born in Los Angeles and grew up in a neighboring suburb, where he attended LAUSD public schools. His father was a fireman and his mother was a housewife. He often rode his bike around the neighborhood and played with his friends who lived on the same block.

In the eleventh grade, Hugo decided he wanted to be a teacher, so he applied to a local state college, where he attended for five years. After completing his secondary credential, Hugo interviewed for a teaching position in LAUSD on his college campus. Then he was told to go and interview at three different schools. VHS had "beat" his high school in the playoffs twice so he decided to go and interview there.

When he arrived at VHS, he met with the principal and told him that he wanted to teach "academic math." It just happened that the principal had a new Title 1 program that gave more money to the school. The new program arrived just shortly after the riots that

had occurred in Watts in the summer of 1965 not too far from VHS. Hugo was hired on the spot in January 1966. His first teaching assignment was to teach one Algebra 1 class and four Basic Math classes. After three years in the math department, Hugo had seniority and he started teaching the AP calculus class.

Now, 45 years later Hugo still teaches AP calculus and a variety of other math classes. Although he would earn more money if he retired, Hugo continues teaching, arriving early to clean his classroom and staying late to tutor students in his Calculus club. In his signature ten-passenger van, he still takes students on hikes on Saturdays and to movies if his class earns a reward.

Joyce. Joyce, 62 and African American, was born and raised in Pontiac, Michigan, “the hub of Pontiac Motors and General Motors.” Her father did not go to school, but her mother was college educated. Her father worked in a factory and her mother was a housewife who was always “there” for Joyce and her six siblings, all of whom are close in age. Her mother instilled in her a love for learning: “I think I’d read three encyclopedias by the time I was in the third grade.”

Joyce grew up in a “highly residential area” and she went to school across the street from “all these rich mansions and stuff from the owners of... the factories.” As she says, she “never knew we were poor until I got to junior high school” when the students around her began talking about shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue and other stores.

Joyce was “valedictorian” of her elementary school, number seven in her junior high school, and classified as gifted throughout school. After graduation from high school, she attended a state university, graduating in 1970. Knowing “from a long time”

that she would be a teacher because she “loved learning,” Joyce moved to Los Angeles: “I came out here and signed a contract with LAUSD on my 22nd birthday, and went out and bought a new car same day.

Since she was good at athletics, Joyce decided to teach Physical Education (P.E.). She started at VHS and never left. She returned to school to earn a Master’s degree in school administration and also became a registered nurse. As Joyce says, “I love to go to school. And so, I love challenges. I don’t know. I’m a person who likes to learn.” After these advancements, she switched from teaching P.E. to teaching history and eventually concluded her career at VHS teaching Health.

She taught at VHS until 2007 when she retired. Now, Joyce spends her time traveling with friends, volunteering on a variety of boards at her church, and taking care of her family.

Melissa. Melissa, 61 and White, was born in the Los Angeles area as the eldest daughter of four siblings. She has one older brother, one younger brother, and one younger sister. Melissa attended public school throughout her education. She graduated from a state college with a degree in liberal arts. She took her first teaching assignment right after college, teaching fourth grade in a private Catholic elementary school. In her words, it was not a “good fit” and so Melissa left in order to find a school that more suited her.

In 1983, Melissa took a teaching position at VHS and never left. There, she taught English for 27 years. She fulfilled a number of leadership positions, including department chair, accreditation committee chair, and member of the School Site Council. She was, in

her words, “the basketball mom,” helping out and caring for the boys’ basketball team for many years. She became active in the teacher’s union, aiding in the organization of activities and even the creation and distribution of flyers.

In 1990, she became the school librarian. She transformed the library, eliminating old, out-dated books and purchasing new, young adult fiction. She also opened the library doors to teachers, students, parents, and community members, believing the library was a shared gathering space that should be welcoming to all in the community. Over the years, Melissa aided numerous teachers, especially new ones. By providing resources, advice, or assistance, she supported many new teachers, connecting them to the campus and to the history of VHS. Unofficially, she was the historian of the school, maintaining the library’s volumes of school newspapers and yearbooks and also sharing the school’s history through her stories and experiences.

In 2010, Melissa played an integral role in helping to fight the reconstitution of the school. Believing the principal would not hire her back if she reapplied, Melissa chose to retire. Many VHS faculty and staff watched sadly as she packed away the remnants of her vibrant, bumper sticker strewn, poster-filled office. In June 2001, she left the campus and began as she said a “new chapter” in her life, retirement.

In her personal life, Melissa married and had one daughter. She and her husband adopted a son. Her marriage ended, but she and her husband remain close. Most recently, she opened her home to her daughter, son-in-law, and two granddaughters, whom she shuttles to school, helps with their homework, and aids in sales of Girl Scout cookies. With her retirement she has more time to assist her family and to read, her two greatest

passions. She does, though, “miss the kids” at VHS often, as she transitions to life after VHS.

Rhea. Rhea, 66 and White, was born and raised just across the freeway from the VHS area. The daughter of Italian immigrants, Rhea grew up speaking Italian and attending public school in the area. Her favorite teacher taught her art in middle school. From this class, Rhea developed a passion for art that she would pursue throughout her life. She graduated at the top of her class in high school and went to a local state university where she majored in art and Italian. Upon graduation, Rhea did not know what career path to pursue. Her father recommended that she follow in the footsteps of her older sister, who was teaching at the time, and so Rhea began to substitute teach in the local area.

At first, fresh out of college, Rhea chose to substitute teach in the schools termed “high needs” because she earned extra money doing so. These schools were located in and around the neighborhood of VHS. In the beginning, Rhea struggled with classroom management and with engaging students. In one instance, she had her purse stolen from the classroom. In another, though, she managed to get students interested in her lesson by using origami. Rhea substitute taught at a number of schools, but by far her favorite was VHS. When she was offered a long-term substitute teaching position there, she jumped at it. Rhea taught art for a teacher who was on maternity leave. After finishing that position, she earned another long-term assignment until finally one day the principal of VHS offered her a full-time teaching position in Spanish. Although Rhea knew only a little Spanish, the principal hired her.

Rhea taught Spanish and English at VHS before finding herself a home in the art department. As an art teacher on A-track, Rhea finally followed in the footsteps of her favorite art teacher. It wasn't long before the administration called on Rhea to assume a leadership position, as the Lead Teacher for the brand new Humanitas program. Reluctantly, due to the fact that she was married and had two small children, Rhea took the position and never left it. She started the Humanitas program with 100 students shared with three teachers in art, English, and Science. After four years, all 100 of the students graduated. Over the years, Humanitas grew and experienced numerous changes. All the while, Rhea remained a fervent advocate of the program. As the school transitioned into wall-to-wall small learning communities, with every student and teacher in one, Rhea mentored new Lead Teachers and offered helpful advice about starting a new program.

In addition to her leadership, Rhea helped to beautify the campus with numerous murals. The most famous mural remains until today in the cafeteria. It depicts one day in the life of VHS from the 1980s. Other murals, including one depicting the school's mascot in the main hallway, have been painted over throughout the years. Rhea and her students even had the opportunity to paint murals on walls throughout the community in 2004. Sadly, these murals were destroyed by graffiti over the years.

In 2010, with the school's reconstitution, Rhea, believing that she would not be re-hired by the principal, chose to retire. She still keeps in touch with students from the Humanitas program. In fact, she even aided them in planning their winning float for the most recent Homecoming parade. She misses VHS a great deal and feels like she was

unfairly “pushed out.” In her retirement, now, she spends time with her brand new granddaughter, cooks, and visits with friends.

Alumni Participants

Beatriz. Beatriz, 25 and Latina, is the only daughter in her family who was born in Michoacán, Mexico because her mother had been visiting family while pregnant. She has two sisters, one older, and one younger. She grew up in the neighborhood around VHS, attending a local elementary and middle school. Her older sister went to VHS, so naturally Beatriz followed. Her first week at VHS there was a student walkout. Students were protesting the principal and seeking for changes, such as the appointment of a new librarian. Told by her teacher that she had the right to express herself, Beatriz walked out of school. She got across the street before she decided to return because she didn't really know the reasons for the walkout.

After graduating from VHS, Beatriz attended her dream school, a local private university, where she received a scholarship. Unfortunately, she experienced a great deal of racism, even having what she terms, the first racist act against her. As she related, she would go home every weekend and when she returned on Sunday for school she would begin crying. Beatriz chose to transfer to a state university where as she said, “I found students who looked like me” that she could relate to.

Beatriz graduated with a bachelor's degree and went on to earn her teaching credential. For five years, she taught at VHS, her alma mater. In the fall of 2010, she left the school to pursue a teaching position at a different school.

Gabriel. Gabriel, 38 and Latino, was born in El Salvador and was educated there. He was just about to finish high school, when the war took a terrible turn: "... It was '89. There was a massive attack on the city and they had a lot of I guess it's strategic points throughout the city and so it was pretty dangerous at the time." In addition, Gabriel was at an age that meant he could be recruited into the war: "At the time I was at an age that I could be recruited by either side either the military or the guerillas, the revolutionaries... You saw a lot of families that their sons would get recruited and they would never see them again. My parents were afraid it would happen to me or my brother." Gabriel's family decided that he and his younger brother would be safer with their father in the United States. Gabriel's father had immigrated to the United States earlier and so he was able to obtain visitors' visas for his two sons. Gabriel and his brother flew to the United States and remained there. Although he and his brother missed their lives in El Salvador, they realized they were safer.

Upon arriving in the United States, Gabriel's father rented an apartment in the neighborhood around VHS and Gabriel enrolled in high school at VHS. He was placed in ESL classes so he could learn the English language and culture. His ESL teachers were in his words "on a mission" to help him and his fellow classmates to be successful in school and in life. To this day, Gabriel cites those teachers as his inspiration and he even keeps in touch with them.

Gabriel received a scholarship to study at a local state college. Unfortunately, due to an error on his counselor's part, he was unable to accept the scholarship and unable to attend the college. He went to a local community college, eventually transferring to a

state college and earning a Bachelor's degree in Spanish. Throughout his time in college, Gabriel worked as a teacher's aide at VHS, helping his ESL teachers and eventually working in the technology department. After he finished with his degree, he was offered a teaching position at VHS. He took that position and he has been teaching there for over 10 years.

Penny. Penny, 19 and Latina, is the middle child of 11 children. She was born and raised in Mexico. She came to the United States at the age of 7. Her parents bought a house two close to VHS and she has lived there since she arrived in the area. She attended local public elementary and middle schools.

She attended VHS and became immediately involved in a variety of opportunities including the Upward Bound program at a local university in the area. She also became active in a community-organizing group for students from local schools. In school, Penny excelled. She read everything that was assigned and turned in assignments early. She also joined the cheerleading squad her freshman year. In her sophomore and junior year, Penny participated in a program that sent students from VHS to University of California, Berkeley for the summer in order to take classes and learn about college.

In November of her junior year, Penny was with her boyfriend waiting for the bus in her neighborhood. A man approached them and asked them where they were from. When Penny and her boyfriend refused to answer, the man took out a gun from the waistband of his pants. Penny's boyfriend told her to run and she did. Unfortunately, she was shot in the elbow. Her boyfriend was shot in the back. It is a memory that haunts

Penny until this day, not just because of the violence but also because of the response of police:

The police station was less than 20 – I would say three blocks away from the scene where I was shot, and 40 minutes later here comes the police... It really, to this day, hurts me to know...that I was two blocks away and 40 minutes later they arrive.

Penny and her boyfriend were taken to the hospital in an ambulance. Penny was released a few days later. Her boyfriend remained in the hospital for two weeks, as doctors determined whether they would do surgery on his back. Ultimately, doctors decided the situation did not warrant surgery and they released him.

Within a week of being released from the hospital, Penny returned to VHS. Feeling way behind, she buried herself in her schoolwork, all the while not attending to the emotional scarring that occurred from the shooting. After a few months, Penny sought counseling and was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She sought refuge in activism, joining a community organization for women who are anti-violence: “I started talking to other people... just started letting them know that it’s not only gangbangers who get shot. It could be anyone, and how hard it is for everyone to live in a community with violence.” In addition, Penny increased her participation in another youth organization, becoming an active opponent of the budget cuts and teacher lay-offs threatened by the school district. Penny spoke at a variety of events, including a forum with the school board president and a rally with teachers and students.

In her senior year, Penny served as the student body president and cheer captain. She also participated in an organization that assists students of color with applying to and enrolling in private liberal colleges. Through this program, Penny applied to and was accepted at a private liberal arts college on the east coast of the United States. She earned

a full scholarship to the university and she also received the Gates Millennium Scholarship, which provided her with full tuition and funds for four years of college. Although she had many accolades to celebrate her senior year, the reconstitution of the school tainted the end of the year. Naturally, Penny participated in numerous community meetings and rallies to fight against the reconstitution.

Now, in her first year at college, Penny has successfully passed all of her classes with B's and A's. One of her essays will even be entered into a campus competition. She is learning how to live in the cold weather and, more importantly, she is learning how to live away from her family, with whom she is very close. She recently purchased a cell phone so she can better keep in touch with her family.

Troy. Troy, 20, was born in Los Angeles and grew up in the neighborhood around VHS. His mother, who is from Belize, arrived in the United States in the late 1980s. His father, who was from Honduras, sadly died when Troy was a baby, so he has very little information about him. Among the few details Troy knows is that his father spoke Spanish as his first language and Garifuna, a language spoken by the Garifuna people, who are the descendents of African slaves and the indigenous people of the Caribbean.

Troy's heritage is a source of pride to him. His favorite story is that his father purchased a cow in Honduras to celebrate Troy's birth. Although he has never been to Honduras and speaks little Spanish and no Garifuna, Troy hopes to visit one day so that he can meet members of his father's family. Troy readily admits, though, that he is American and he identifies himself as African American.

He attended a public elementary school near VHS, having to start late due to some family problems:

And when I first came in... I started late, so my mother had to I guess train me, she had to put a lot of information into my head to keep up with the other kids. But I was able to, and I just never was held back or anything like that.

Troy's mother re-married while he was in elementary school and his mother had his sister. Together, the family lived in a house owned by Troy's stepfather's sister.

Unfortunately, due to some conflict, the family had to move out of the house. They moved around three times until settling into an apartment near VHS, where Troy would go to school.

As he approached ninth grade, Troy became frightened of attending VHS due to the "stories" he used to hear about gang activity at VHS. Although he wanted to attend another school, Troy's mother and stepfather convinced him to go to VHS. He related the story: "When I went there... I was afraid. I thought I was going to get bothered. But then... I realized that it was...just a lot of gossip... People just saying that because they...don't know...what's really happening at the school."

Although he had been a mediocre student in middle school, he excelled at VHS. His motivation was the fact that he did not earn any awards or certificates in middle school and he wanted to try harder so he could "get into a good college." His first year, he earned a 3.8 grade point average. In addition, he joined the track team and became active in his small learning community.

Upon graduation from VHS, Troy received a full scholarship to attend a local private university. He is currently a junior, majoring in screenwriting. His goal is to write and produce movies someday. Despite his success after high school, Troy encountered a

serious obstacle with his family. His freshman year in college, his mother became homeless. As Troy put it, that basically meant he is homeless and so on vacations he must find a place to stay or remain in his apartment on campus. His mother lived in a shelter and Troy spoke of finishing his degree so that he could obtain a good job and take care of his mother. Troy also continued to support his sister, who was preparing to graduate from high school herself. In the future, Troy hoped to pursue his dream of making movies and helping to provide financial stability for his family.

Findings

Data analysis from participant interviews revealed the following four themes:

1. Opportunities diminished by local, state, and federal policies and laws
2. Racializing of economic competition
3. Neoliberal education reforms dismantling social capital
4. Media blames victims and obfuscates policies and laws

Opportunities Diminished by Local, State, and Federal Policies and Laws

Community Elder Participants told story after story about VHS in the 1970s and 1980s. A central theme of their stories was that VHS during that time had many more opportunities for its students to assist in their success. Vocational programs offered students the chance to learn skills and even to earn certifications prior to graduation. The athletics program was recognized throughout the city and even nation for its success. Clubs and organizations thrived. Also, community elders felt that students had greater ability to attend college through many more scholarship programs.

Community elders felt that in the 1990s these opportunities diminished due to a number of local school district policies and the enactment of state and federal laws. The sentiments of community elders were echoed by other teacher participants who felt that support of school programs changed during this time.

Alumni participants did not by and large express that opportunities for students had shifted. However, they did describe their own experiences with programs, such as ESL and athletics, and how important these programs were for them during their time at VHS.

Vocational programs. Community elder participants described how a myriad of vocational paths of study thrived at VHS during the 1970s and 1980s, including woodworking, agriculture, auto repair, drafting, speech and debate, and photography.

For example, Hugo, a community elder, spoke of the famous photography program that operated at VHS for many years. This program trained students in all aspects of photography, from shot selection to developing film. Students took photos of events at school and in the local community, and then were able to publish their photographs in the school newspaper and even in local newspapers. Hugo told this story to illustrate the renown of the photography program:

[W]e got so well-known that one time a teacher showed me an application. Somebody from some country like Australia wanted to come and get admitted to our photography program because we had such a quality program. They were getting awards.

Silvia, a teacher participant who taught at VHS for 25 years, remembered that the business department, which she joined in 1984, offered 12 different courses from “office procedures, business machines, retailing and marketing.” Students also took classes such as business math and business English, which geared instruction toward learning math

and literacy skills in the context of working in the business field. In addition, teachers took students on a variety of field trips: “[W]e tried to get the business kids to go to different companies to see how neat it would be, working in an office, or get the feel of working in management and stuff.”

As community elders illustrated, often these vocational paths of study would connect students to a particular career path during their time in high school. For instance, as Hugo discussed, the cosmetology program enabled students to earn their cosmetology license while in high school, so that students could emerge from high school and enter a career pathways immediately. While some of these programs did not necessarily lead to college for students, community elders expressed how these programs did enable students to gain employment after graduation from high school.

Athletics program. According to community elders, VHS’s athletics department was well recognized across the nation. In particular, Joyce, a community elder, pointed out that the school’s baseball team produced more professional players than any other high school in the nation. Joyce named a number of students who became professional baseball players, including Eric Davis and Chester Lemon. Other students, such as Rickie Bell and David Fulcher, became professional football players.

As Joyce recalled, the students would often return to their alma mater to speak to students and to “give back.” Silvia, a teacher participant, also echoed Joyce’s sentiments, recalling how a number of these students would return to give motivational talks to students. Hugo, a community elder, indicated that the school had a process to honor successful graduates, which included entrance into the school’s Wall of Fame. As he

described it, alumni would be nominated for entrance into the wall of fame and an alumni committee would decide who would be admitted annually. A ceremony would award the alumni with their recognition. A Wall of Fame inductee's photograph and biography would be hung in the hallway on the first floor in the main entrance, so that students could see those who came before them and feel part of a larger tradition of success at VHS.

Clubs and organizations. Community elders spoke of the fact that the campus served as the home to a variety of clubs and organizations, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Hugo, he sponsored his first club, the jazz club, only three years after starting at VHS: "Some students came to me and said will you be our jazz club sponsor. I said sure what do I have to do? Oh well you bring a record player and we play jazz records."

Hugo's next club was the Booster club, which supported VHS athletics by attending games at home and at other locations. With "over 200 members," Hugo would arrange buses and trips to support athletes at games. He told stories of taking students, decked out in VHS gear, to support VHS athletes at championship games around the city and throughout the state.

Then, Hugo sponsored a hiking club, in which he took students on hiking trips throughout the local area and even as far as the Grand Canyon and Death Valley. He has numerous stories and photographs of hiking trips with his students over the years. Among the most interesting stories are those of spring break trips to the Grand Canyon, where he and his students would hike down to the river and back in one day, a very strenuous and

difficult endeavor that they trained for throughout the year. On the way back to Los Angeles from the Grand Canyon, Hugo and other teacher chaperones would stop in Las Vegas to eat at the Circus Circus buffet. These trips are very special to Hugo and to his former students, a fact that was evident at the 1980 class reunion. As alumni came over to talk to him, they often mentioned the hiking trip(s) they had gone on and reminisced about what happened on that particular trip.

Hugo explained that his hiking club, though, from early on was “off the radar,” meaning that no one but the students and some teacher volunteers knew about it. This was due to the fact that administrators have approached Hugo over the years about the “liability” of sponsoring a hiking club, and as a result, he always told students that the club and its trips were not related to the school.

Access to college. Community elder participants spoke of the opportunities students experienced in the 1970s and 1980s, when students were offered scholarships and acceptances to attend prestigious schools such as Vassar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvey Mudd, and Yale. It was a time when colleges sought to enroll African American students due to the implementation of affirmative action programs after the Civil Rights movement. According to community elders Hugo, Joyce, and Melissa students were offered college admittance and scholarships quite easily. As Hugo said, “All the counselor had to do was look at cum [folders] and look at grades and contact colleges and they got a scholarship.”

Hugo told the story of a graduate who went to MIT and worked for TRW automotive designing computer chips. One day, he visited Hugo in his classroom and spoke to his students:

He came back and told my students when after he had graduated about 10 years he said, 'I'm an experiment that's supposed to fail.' So they were opening doors without expecting our students to do too much. Well guess what? Our students can do quite a bit if they're given the opportunity.

Community elders expressed how these alumni would often return to the school to give motivational talks. Still today, Hugo, who is the only community elder still teaching at VHS, receives visits from graduates who have completed their college education and have careers now. He keeps in touch with these students via email and his attendance at class reunions. He uses photos and stories of these students in his classroom in an effort to motivate his current students to succeed.

Opportunities decline. Community elder participants felt that in the 1990s and 2000s many of the programs that had been successful declined or were cut. In addition, students' ability to enroll in college on scholarships became more limited. Clubs and organizations on campus dwindled.

The influx of technology and move away from vocational education changed the business department for Silvia, a teacher participant who taught at VHS for 25 years. As she recalled, the business department changed its name to the technology department:

We lost accounting, business organization, business law. Keyboarding—you went from typing to keyboarding, which was good. But you don't get those techniques like you do in typing. I think they should have kept typing. But we just had to implement a little typing program in our schedule of lessons...And accounting was a major loss. You know? Business English is English. Business math is math. But I think we lost so much. So, we actually lost the whole business education department and went to technology.

In Silvia's opinion the loss of the business department produced a loss of additional elective classes and a loss of opportunities for students to learn skills, such as typing.

Participants noted how changes in the school's demographics, college admittance policies, and even state propositions impacted VHS students' ability to gain admittance into college. As Joyce says after the later years of the 1970s and early years of the 1980s, the school sent "even less" students to college in the 1990s and "by 2000 it was hard to get kids to go to college."

With the shift of the student population to include more Latino immigrant students, new challenges arose for these students in accessing college. Teacher participants such as Adriana and Jesse spoke about the challenges undocumented students faced in matriculating to college. In the 1990s and 2000s, a changing landscape of state and federal legal decisions and policies affected whether these undocumented students could enter college and receive financial aid.

In community elder Hugo's mind, a shift occurred as he felt the process for entering college was more difficult than it was in the 1970s and 1980s. As he related, now students must "apply with all this paperwork," and the actual application process is now more laborious for students. Additionally, Hugo expressed how students who "don't have papers" were "excluded from a lot of things." He also felt that the opportunities available to these students were fewer: "There are still some ways to get scholarships if you're undocumented but it's much more difficult. So many of our students I could motivate them with, 'Hey look you get good grades; you can go to college.' That used to be the case but it's not anymore."

Hugo tells the story of one of his best Algebra 2 students:

I remember one of my students this was many years ago she was one of my best students my Algebra 2 students when they passed some of these measures in California that restricted your

education if you didn't have papers she turned to me and said, 'What am I doing this for? Why should I be in Algebra 2 when I know that after I graduate high school I can't go anywhere else? I mean I should go out to work for my parents. Work in a minimum-wage job in Chinatown. Pay my rent.'

In Hugo's opinion, the doors that used to be open to Hugo's students, the very doors that his students walked through to go to MIT and other schools, "closed very tightly...[a]nd it's very hard for students to get in any place regardless of their grades."

Among the reasons cited for these reductions in programs were cuts in funding, the shift away from vocation education, changes in state laws, and even changes in federal policy, such as No Child Left Behind. Increases in administrative turnover and teacher turnover reduced the number of clubs and organizations on campus.

In Joyce's viewpoint, the school district played a role in eliminating programs, particularly electives:

And I think it was quite discriminatory to take away the electives and the things the kids go to school and enjoy...And so, they said, 'Well, we're going to make everybody alike. Everybody has to go college educated. And we're going to take the fun out of going to school.'

Remaining opportunities. Most alumni participants spoke about the various programs and clubs that they joined during their time at VHS. These stories provided insight into some of the shifts in opportunities that occurred. In most cases, teachers, despite setbacks due to policies or laws, found ways to provide opportunities to their students.

Gabriel, an alumnus who attended VHS from 1989 to 1993, remembered how his ESL teachers were on a "mission" to help him and his classmates learn English and adapt to American culture. Gabriel remembered his teachers as providing bilingual instruction in his home language. Also, teachers supplemented the instructional curriculum with a

variety of clubs meant to help students learn English but also to learn about the culture and community around them. For instance, with his ESL teachers, Gabriel and his classmates wrote and produced a newsletter known as “*Fronteras/Borders*.” Also, he joined a volunteer organization sponsored by his ESL teacher. Gabriel recalled serving the VHS campus or community by collecting toys, cleaning up after school, or cleaning graffiti on campus. He also joined the Science Explorers club:

We would go on field trips. One I remember in particular was going to Griffith Park and going into the observatory. I mean I’d been to Griffith Park but I’d never been in the observatory. Also the La Brea Tar Pits...We went to the Cabrillo Beach Museum... For Explorers we would do a lot of things like that, things that were out of South Central.

His ESL teachers “would even give us jobs once in a while” because it was hard to find jobs in South Central. In many cases, Gabriel saw his experience in ESL as a “bubble” where he was supported and nurtured to be successful both academically and personally.

For Troy, an alumnus who attended VHS from 2004 to 2008, athletics served as a way to avoid other, potentially more negative distractions, and to learn skills needed for life. He says, “[T]rack kept me from doing anything that I wasn’t supposed to do.” In addition, he learned about himself through his running: “[W]e see our habits in our running. Like me, I’m someone that tries hard, but if it – if it’s too much, I’ll quit.” Among the greatest assets of having participated in track for four years, Troy pointed to his coach, who “was always honest” and “wanted us to have discipline and try to push ourselves to do better.” Troy’s memories of his time practicing and training for track remained his fondest from VHS, serving to take up a majority of our time together.

Hugo, a community elder, also spoke about his continued sponsorship of the hiking club and his most recent club, the calculus club, which meets everyday after

school and during vacations in order to tutor students in calculus and to prepare for the AP calculus exam. For this club, Hugo sponsors his own “scholarship program” for students who pass the AP calculus exam. Using money he has “invested” over the years from his summer job, Hugo mailed students checks after the results of the AP calculus exam are received.

When asked about his scholarship program, Hugo offered few details, saying “it’s off the record” due to the fact that it belongs to the “underground economy” and requires no “paperwork.” Yet, in some ways, Hugo’s scholarship program illustrated his willingness to fulfill a need he has found to not be met by society over the past years. As affirmative action ended with the passage of Proposition 209 in 1996 and various laws have prevented undocumented students from receiving financial aid for college, Hugo’s scholarship program functioned to supplement the gap left behind, to recreate, in a small way, for his current students the opportunities his students in the 1970s and 1980s had.

Additional participants spoke about having to fill in to assist students in gaining entrance and financial aid to college. Teacher participant, Jesse, related stories of taking students on trips to visit colleges, even up in Northern California, and of helping students fill out their financial aid forms. He said, “I would tell students, ‘Bring your parents’ tax forms, and we’ll work it out.’”

For Adriana, her decision to become a college counselor was born out of her desire to assist undocumented students to attend college. She began helping students who did not have legal documents to access college:

There was a law... which was kind of ambiguous. Because of this [law] the students could go to [California State Universities], and they didn’t have to say if...they had a... Social Security

number, so... a lot of students were going to study that way. But that changed, so the kids didn't have ... for a few years they didn't have any way. So I started taking my AP students after school in May to Santa Monica, arranging the meeting, the appointment with this person who can help us, and then arranging when they were going to take the placement test. And I started maybe taking the first year eight to 10 students. Then there was a year that I took like 60. So after being tired of driving after school to Santa Monica, there was a year that I said, 'That's ridiculous.' So I asked for a bus, and I took like 60 students to Santa Monica.

On her own, Adriana filled a need she saw unfilled by society. By doing research and taking undocumented students to access programs at this community college, Adriana subverted laws that determined these students should not have access to college. From these experiences, Adriana decided to return to school to earn her credential as a counselor.

With her credential in place, she began working at the college center helping students to navigate the difficult college application process: "It's absolutely ridiculous, and it's very difficult for people, I mean, for students who are first generation, not only first generation going to college but also first generation in this country." According to Adriana, for any high school student, let alone for a student who is the first in their family to go to college, the college application process is complicated. As she stated, "So with the students it's like you have to take them by the hand, okay, and to work with them one by one... and fill out the application." Adriana described how great the need for assistance is these days in navigating the college process.

Adriana tried to keep in touch with students after they graduate. Over the past few years at VHS, she even brought alumni who were attending local colleges back to campus to speak to students: "I usually bring them once or twice a year, and they go to visit the classrooms, and then they tell you stories. They say, 'Oh... you were right.'"

Alumni participants confirmed these teacher participants' stories. Troy spoke of running with Jesse on a college trip to northern California he attended. While Penny spoke of working closely with Adriana to learn about scholarships and to apply for them:

[E]very time there was a scholarship, she would make sure that all the seniors knew about it, even when some of the seniors didn't care. But just the fact that I was able to apply for all the scholarships that I was able to get.

Penny attributed earning several scholarships to Adriana's help.

Participants' stories indicated the change in the process for applying to college, as well as the laws defining who may be accepted into college. Changes in demographics in the school and community meant that some students legally struggled to apply to college due to immigration status. Teachers, though, found ways to assist students despite the changing landscape for students.

Racializing of Economic Competition

Community elder participants described how VHS's student population shifted from predominantly African American to Latino. Several alumni participants and even one teacher participant, Jesse, experienced this demographic shift as residents of the VHS community. Throughout the stories, participants tried to explain the results of these demographics shifts at both the school site and the community. Participants spoke of the intergroup tension that resulted as African American students and families became the minority, in a place where they had deep social, communal and historical roots. As Latino students and families became the majority, their presence represented the need for new programs that addressed their linguistic, social and emotional needs. Although the tension between African Americans and Latinos has been cast as interracial tension, participants' stories helped illuminate how the tension went beyond race, actually revealing the

struggle for economic resources in this community where declining economic growth at the school site and in the community created competition for resources, jobs, and prosperity.

Shift in demographics. Community elder participants spoke openly of the shift in demographics in the school and community. They expressed how in the 1970s and early 1980s the school and community were entirely African American. Hugo, who is White, recalled: “As the population changed culturally and racially changed when it was predominately I say essentially an all-black high school when I started in January 66 and it stayed that way I don’t know I’m just guessing 20 years.” The campus had as Hugo recalled a number of organizations for African American students, including a Black Student Union. The homeowners in the community, according to Melissa, were African American.

The faculty at this time was predominantly African American and White. Melissa, who is White, recalled her experience as a new teacher: “And some of the African American teachers who had been there for a long time had, like, a five-year mark. You know, if you made it past five years, then you were okay.” Melissa’s experience illustrated a degree of wariness on the part of African American educators at VHS accepting new White teacher. A protective stance emerged from Melissa’s story, as the African American educators were portrayed as expressing concern about the intentions of a new White teacher.

In the late 1980s, Latino immigrants began to move into the community and so the campus demographics changed. In some ways, community elder Melissa remembered

the shift as happening “pretty fast...a big change, over 10 or 12 years.” The shift required VHS teachers to learn more about their new students. As Melissa recalled, Latino students came from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica and Mexico. At times, students and even teachers would incorrectly refer to Latino students as Mexican, and students would respond: “[T]hey would say... ‘Not everybody who speaks Spanish is Mexican’... Because the African-American kids would refer to them as Mexicans.... And so it was kind of touchy... So we had to do some education on both sides.”

As community elder Melissa expressed, she learned about different nationalities and even about prejudices harbored among students in relationship to national identity:

One of the things that I didn't know was the various prejudices that exist in the Latino community. I guess, Mexicans and Salvadorians have a long history of not getting along... The kids didn't have that, but they would talk about, ‘Oh, if my parents knew that I was friends with a Salvadorian, they would be so mad.’

Melissa's story also illustrated a theme she discussed elsewhere, a theme about students' development of attitudes that differed from their parents. In this case, the students indicated internalizing their parents' views about people from other cultures and nationalities.

Joyce, an African American community elder, also expressed how the influx of Latino immigrants produced a change at the school. As she recalled: “The community changed. Okay, and when you had the community change and the racial balance change, then you had a new society to deal with, a new group of kids to teach.” Joyce recalled how Latino students needed instruction in the English language and also needed to learn the culture of the country in which they now resided. The school, as she remembered,

began to receive “funding to assist students in learning English and teachers needed to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of this new population of students.”

Results of demographic shifts. Tensions over how to fund programs to support the needs of the new Latino student population emerged. Melissa, a White community elder, remembered speaking up at a faculty meeting about the need to purchase some new books by Latino authors for students to read in their English classes. In response, an African American parent at the meeting responded by saying, “No. This is our school.”

Additionally, Melissa remembered the need to find and fund additional support staff to aid Latino students many of whom came “from Central American because of the war” and “needed to talk to somebody.” Yet, the school did not have any “counselors who spoke Spanish, no social workers, no psychiatric social workers, no nobody...who spoke Spanish.” Melissa explained how she and other teachers “tried calling different schools that had social worker programs or, you know, clinical therapist programs to see if they could, like, help us with volunteers... and it was really difficult.”

The shift in educational resources and funding away from African American students towards Latino students produced tension. Just as African Americans and Latinos competed for jobs in the neighborhood around VHS, the parents and students at the school competed for educational funding.

As Joyce, an African American community elder explained: “And a lot of the [African American] kids were moving out of the neighborhood. Because they could see the changes. And then the parents could see the changes. And just everything was changing.” At this point, Joyce felt that the African Americans who remained in the

community “lost their identity.” As she said, African Americans found themselves the “minority” and felt that the school was not as welcoming as it once was.

Competing economic demands inside and outside of the school created racial tensions. As Melissa, a White community elder recalled, the “hardest times” were in 1989 and 1990 when she said the school was “half” African American and “half” Latino. The campus experienced what she described as “riots” regularly during this time.

Silvia, an African American teacher participant recalled a tense racist moment that she experienced in her classroom. A student entered her classroom late. Since he was chewing gum, she asked him to spit out the gum. He did, but before class ended he was chewing another piece of gum. She recalled:

I said, ‘What did I tell you?’ And he said, ‘Blah-blah-blah *pinche mayate* [sic].’ [Gasp]. And all the kids did that, and I learned all the bad words in Spanish long ago. And I said, ‘I’m not your nigger bitch [sic].’ And he said, ‘I wasn’t talking to you.’ And I said, ‘Well, who were you talking to? What you’re saying was feminine, so I know you were talking to me. Now get out of here.’ And I had the worst feeling. I said, ‘I’m going to fail this boy.’ I thought that to myself. So, he apologized, and he turned out to be a good student. He was late and kind of had too much mouth and got [Unsatisfactory], but he got a B in the class.

For Silvia, that episode was the first insult ever “thrown” at her as a teacher. As she explains, she was extremely upset by the incident, yet she managed to forge a relationship with the student despite his racist microaggression, a cutting, racial insult aimed at a person of color (Davis, 1989).

Melissa, a White community elder, indicated that at times students would bring up race to her. As she expressed, “if they needed an excuse, they would say, ‘You just don’t like me because I’m black,’ or you know... what do you have against Mexicans or... something like that, but, I mean, they weren’t really serious.” Although Melissa felt the

students were not serious, the story she narrated indicated that race and racism were present regularly in the thoughts, conversations, and interactions at the school.

Outside of school, teacher participant Jesse, a Latino, and alumnus participant, Gabriel, also Latino, spoke of the racial tension, threats, and violence that occurred. Jesse remembered being chased by African Americans from the community. Gabriel remembered:

But if it was in the middle of the night, because I remember that happening to some friends and again this was racial, if you were walking down the street by yourself and you saw an African-American guy bigger than you or a couple they would beat you up and take everything you had.

Added to the racial tension and violence was the police presence in the neighborhood. As Melissa, a White community elder, remembered one time when she stopped to talk to some students while driving home:

If I was driving home, I would stop and talk to kids that I... that I knew from school. One time I had a policeman pull up behind me as I was talking to a bunch of kids. He thought I was there to buy drugs... And he said, you know, 'This isn't safe. You better keep moving.' And I said, 'These are my students. I teach at [Victory] high school.' And he said, 'Yeah, this isn't a safe neighborhood. Keep moving.' So, I mean, if he even believed me... But, I mean, he wanted to see my driver's license. He wanted to know what I was doing, but I never had trouble. I always felt safe in the neighborhood.

Alumni participant Gabriel recalled a time when his brother was stopped by police officers who accused him of stealing his own car. And of course, Penny related the hurt and pain caused when she was shot only two blocks from a police station. The response to her call for help took 40 minutes.

In the latter half of the 1990s and early 2000s, at VHS, the school began to shift in many ways to better serve its new Latino student population. Melissa, a White community elder, spoke of how the administration made a concerted effort to hire more Latino teachers. Adriana, who helped provide translation for Spanish-speaking parents at

School Site Council meetings, stopped having to do that after the school district hired more Spanish-speaking translators.

Commenting on the change in the community and school demographics, Hugo said:

But now we are about 90% Latino and 8% African-American and African Americans feel kind of left out. We do a lot of things bilingual. We do assemblies where people speak bilingually. African-American parents that were still on committees, they feel upset that their children were not getting an equal deal because there's too much on English as a second language so there's some conflicts going on with parents.

Neoliberal Education Reforms Dismantle Social Capital

Participants addressed various relationships within the VHS community. Community elder participants spoke of a greater degree of cohesion among staff members, particularly prior to the reform of the year-round calendar, after which staff turnover and administrative turnover greatly increased.

Close community. In the 1980s, community elders remembered staff celebrations. The faculty in Joyce's words "partied together." Silvia recalled the "camaraderie" of the staff, which was built through a variety of gatherings: "We'd have parties at teachers' homes for Christmas. Somebody would host a party, and everybody would bring a dish. And like I say, I used to have in-services over here, maybe sometimes 30 people because I don't live too far from the school." Hugo recalled playing golf with colleagues after school finished on Fridays. In addition, he remembered the end of the year faculty dinners:

We would have a nice faculty dinner at the end of the year. Everybody attended. Kind of a retirement dinner and graduation dinner. It was a great feeling... We had teachers who had been there 40 years or more... [VHS] graduates and... a continuation of young and old teachers.

In addition, Silvia remembered the school administration made an effort to connect faculty members to the community in which the school was located. She recalled being taken on a tour of the community during professional development: “They took us through the community to let us see the churches. If there was a library, all the little mom-and-pop stores, and the cleaners, and the beauty shops... And the parks, ‘cause, you know, the kids like the parks.” Melissa recalled how much more “stable” the faculty was in the 1980s when there were no “special schedules” or major reform efforts. As she said, “Everybody knew everybody. You knew all the kids. You knew all the teachers.”

Administrative and teacher turnover. However, this communal atmosphere changed in the 1990s when the school began to experience upheaval in its administrative staff. Community elder participants spoke of the number of principals and assistant principals that worked at VHS over the years. For example, Melissa’s first 10 years at VHS, she had one principal. Her last 20 years, she experienced so many that she could not even name them all. Her story was not uncommon. No community elder could name all the principals they had worked under and many admitted this fact outright. Joyce summed up the experience:

I can’t name them all. There was too many. It was too many. I mean, whereas in the ‘70s, I could have listed about five or six, and then in the ‘80s, it was a lot. A lot of people going and coming... And things got real disorganized.

Community elder participants connected the high degree of administrative turnover with an increase in teacher turnover. Community elder participants expressed that teacher turnover was always a fact of life at VHS. Hugo recalled how after three years of teaching, he had the most seniority in the math department. Joyce expressed, “Every year, we’d have about at least a 21-24 percent turnover in teachers at [Victory].”

Yet, as the school administration destabilized and other reforms came to the campus, the turnover continued to increase. Joyce expressed how the '90s brought about an increase well over the "24 percent" mark in new teachers. Melissa described the experience of not knowing who people were, whether they were a "sub" or a new teacher. The school became in Joyce's words "fragmented" and in Silvia's words "something different."

Colleague relationships. Despite the destabilization in the administration and the increase in new teachers, faculty tried to stick together. As Melissa recalled:

The fact that we had bad administrators made teachers kind of cling to each other for support and the fact that it's a hard place to start out, so that people wanted to help the new people... Especially, since once the administration, I guess, what we felt is, like, the district had abandoned [Victory]. They kept sending loser administrators. So we kind of had to take care of each other.

Melissa recalled helping new teachers to set up their classroom, find the copy machine, get books from the textbook room, and do many more things to get established at the school. In fact, she recollected that the teachers started an informal "buddy system" to assist one another.

Teacher participants could name several colleagues who had helped them over the years. For many, some of their mentors were the community elder participants, such as Hugo, Melissa, and Rhea. For others, they were colleagues who had long ago left VHS. Both community elder and teacher participants expressed high levels of social capital among faculty.

Additionally, community elder participants and teacher participants recalled disagreements they had with colleagues over numerous topics. Rhea recounted a story about a dispute in her department that resulted in the need for conflict mediation by

administration. Rhea's account revealed the complex nature of colleague relationships within a school site, where collegiality and conflict often comeingle.

Student and teacher relationships. Teachers spoke of cultivating relationships with students. For example, Silvia did not spend her lunches in the cafeteria with teachers, but rather in her computer lab, where she opened her doors to students, many of whom would flock there to use the computers and talk with her. As she recalled, students were "very open" with her. She would learn things about students, such as pregnancies, before even their families knew: "A lot of times, I'd say, 'I know this before your mother knows it.'"

For Melissa, the one thing that kept her working at VHS over all the years was the students. She described the students as "wonderful" and explained that in her retirement she really missed the interactions she had with the VHS students. For Melissa, the boys' basketball team garnered her attention and assistance. "I had all the team members in my classes. We went to all the games. Even my family went to the games. You know, my husband took pictures at the games, and it was it was very close-knit."

As a student, Beatriz recalled her counselor signing her up and offering her several opportunities to attend conferences and events. One time, she even went to Washington, D.C. for five days for free. In addition, her teachers spoke about college, something that surprised her at the time: "Miss [Anderson] would say, "Oh we're going to learn this too so we can be prepared for college. And I was like college? Who said anything about college?" Indeed, once during her vacation, Miss [Anderson] took Beatriz to UCLA for a campus visit.

Carl discussed the concept of “adopting” a student, which metaphorically referred to the ways in which VHS teachers would assist students in a variety of ways: “I remember buying a kid’s letterman jacket for him. And I know other teachers would have done the same.” In addition, Carl spoke about offering his classroom to students who just needed a place to sit to think, cry, or talk.

Rhea, like other participants, spoke of her small learning community, one of the first at VHS, as a space where students felt safe, respected, and nurtured. Teachers taught the same students so they were able to get to know students and their families throughout the years, often teaching siblings, cousins, and even children of Humanitas’ alumni. The strength of Humanitas could be found, she said, in the fact that students knew teachers cared: “When you have somebody that’s going to stand up for you, and take care of you, and intercede for you with your other teachers, if the need arises, then that kid is yours for life.” For Rhea, the relationships she forged with Humanitas’ students were very “special” and many alumni continue to keep in touch, a fact evidenced by the presence of several at her retirement party in June 2010.

In fact, a number of participants indicated that they kept in touch with alumni in a variety of ways. Most recently, all participants expressed using Facebook to reconnect with both students and teachers from VHS. Silvia spoke of how she went on the site and found that over 500 past students had been looking for her. She now visits the site regularly and maintains contact with many of her former students.

Jesse discussed VHS being a “family” several times. From his perspective, this had to do with teaching the “brothers and sisters of [his] friends in [his] classes.” He

stated, “You build up, and like I think that’s the real importance of coming back to your community school and trying to teach there.” Jesse spoke of mentoring students and feeling like their “protector,” particularly because many students in the community felt “like the societal institutional places where they get protection,” such as the police, “are failing them.”

Parents and community. Community elders spoke of a strong presence of community members on the campus particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. As the community around VHS experienced more gangs and violence, the school changed as well. A large fence went up around the campus in the 1990s. Entrance onto the campus was restricted to one entry area in the main building. Overall, community elder participants felt the school became less open and inviting to community members.

Some efforts were made to encourage community members to feel more welcome on campus. As the librarian, Melissa tried to make the library a welcoming space for anyone on or off campus. She would have visitors from the community come to check out books or to look at old school newspapers or yearbooks. She also opened the library for parent conference nights. On weekends, Jesse, who lived in the area, would meet students and community members to play soccer matches. Adriana would open the college center on weekends and hold parent workshops about how students could access college. As a teacher, Gabriel’s small learning community opened an office for parents to use during the school day and after school. Parents in his small learning community would frequently visit with teachers and hold meetings with other parents. In July 2010, after the school’s reconstitution, the administration had part of the fence removed in an

effort to enhance the appearance of the school and to encourage community members to access the school more often.

Alumni participants spoke about their experiences with their own families during their time at VHS. For example, although Beatriz's parents did not have much education, her father completed middle school and her mother did not even go that far, her parents supported her by consenting for her to attend conferences and even the trip to Washington, D.C. Although her parents never "got on her" about having good grades, Beatriz remembered they signaled that she and her three sisters should go to school in order to obtain a better life. When she chose to attend her "dream" college her parents supported her, providing rides on the weekends. And when she wanted to transfer after her first semester, her parents continued to support her by helping her to move back home and live there as she earned her Bachelor's degree.

During high school, Gabriel's family sacrificed tremendously in an effort to protect him and his brother from harm during the war in El Salvador. Not only did his family sacrifice to send him to the United States, but his father worked two jobs, often working nights, so he could provide for his two sons. Gabriel worked with his father at a liquor store, but only on the weekends so that during the week he could focus on his studies. His father sometimes worked two jobs to support Gabriel and his other brother. He also sought to get his sons' legal paperwork in order and to apply to bring his mother here from El Salvador. After 13 years of living in South Central, Gabriel said he and his family finally saved enough money to buy a house in another area of the city.

Troy credited his mother and family for also supporting him and preventing him from participating in negative activities such as gangs and drugs. His mother made him watch John Singleton's *Boyz in the Hood* when he was very young, which "scared" him about gangs for "most of [his] life." Although he saw many of his family members use drugs and alcohol, often with very negative and even deadly effect, Troy did not use drugs or alcohol. To this day, Troy cited his mother as the biggest factor that helped encourage his creativity and his desire to become a screenwriter.

As a ninth grader, Penny joined a local community organization that assisted local youth and planned community-organizing activities. Involved in a number of activities in her community and school, Penny's family was always supportive:

My mom didn't know much about school. She knew a little bit about college. She just knew she wanted [us] to get into college, and I know my family was just really – they supported me 100 percent. A lot of the things... they didn't understand but they were like, 'Yeah, go for it. Take that test... If you're joining this club, do it. If it's getting you into college, do it.' My family was always there 100 percent.

Reform efforts. All participants spoke of a number of reform efforts instituted at VHS over the years. From reading programs to year-round calendar, participants provided stories about being part of a number of reform efforts mostly from the school district level.

Year-round calendar. Participants spoke most often of the reform that changed the campus from a traditional September to June calendar to a year-round calendar with three different tracks. Each track assigned students and teachers to the school during different times throughout the year. That same year, the school enrolled brand new ninth graders as well, as the school district changed the grade configuration for high school from grades 10, 11 and 12, to grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. In addition, the campus lost a

veteran principal and had a new administration. As Melissa recalled, “It was a year that we lost that principal who had been there for 10 years... And so we went from a very stable situation to total chaos.”

Carl spoke his first day at VHS, which was the first day that the year-round calendar was implemented. That day the school enrolled not only its new 10th grade class, but also its first 9th grade class. Carl recalled the day:

So the head counselor... she stood in the quad and I remember her because she's the same person who told me that I had to learn to do things the '[Victory] Way' and I was trying to explain how the year-round worked and she said, 'No, no, no. You'll have to learn how to do things the [Victory] Way.' She stared out in the quad at all the students silently sobbing.

Carl's description illustrated the school had some entrenched aspects of its culture, namely a sense of ownership and pride in operating a specific “Victory” way. Yet, the addition of so many new, young students appeared to overwhelm this particular administrator and, according to Carl, other aspects of the campus. The school buildings, fully operational for the first time in July, had no AC. “I had girls fainting all the time to the point where putting a fan in the window did nothing. Putting three fans in the windows did nothing except circulate hot air. So I started taking the kids [outside].” School facilities ill equipped for students to learn in the summer were now pushed into use, and ultimately into overuse.

Teaching on a year-round calendar was new to the faculty. Hugo recalled how teachers in the math department struggled over how to adapt their curriculum to meet the new time constraints and how to assist students who now experienced more frequent vacations:

The first comment in the math department was my students forgot everything and now I have to start all over... We used to have time to relax in terms of letting our minds relax. The students didn't have the spurt of compressed schedule like they have now.

When the school went year-round, Joyce, who taught advanced gymnastics, recalled the changes it brought to the requirements for Physical Education, which was her department:

And then programs were deleted. And so, when you drop the four years of P.E., then you drop the gymnastics team. And so, that was gone. We had a wrestling team. That was gone. And so, each year, as each year progressed, all the things, fun things that kids went to school for, were eliminated. And so, that made a strain on the education system.

In Melissa's opinion, the change to a year-round schedule eroded the cohesion on and off campus. The faculty became "much younger" as many new teachers were hired in order to accommodate the increased numbers of students. As she recalled:

[T]hat was the year that things got really chaotic. I mean, before that, the neighborhood had a bad reputation, but the school was kind of like an oasis... After that, the school, like, fed into the chaos... You know, we never got an administrator who could handle it. So...the neighborhood sort of lost trust... And, of course, the neighborhood was changing, too.... So it was bad for the school all the way around.

In many participants' minds, the campus became more rundown and crowded as the years of utilizing the year-round schedule advanced. Gabriel remembered how he "could easily find a table to sit at with [his] friends" during lunchtime when he was a student. A situation that he felt changed after the start of the year-round calendar. Even now at VHS, he said, "There's no place to sit during lunch...because there's so many kids." In addition, he recalled how the campus would be closed during the summer and during that time it would be thoroughly cleaned and repaired. Now, he said, the campus is dirty and there is "no time" to clean it thoroughly.

Jesse echoed Gabriel's sentiments about the disrepair of the campus. In his viewpoint, the school facilities were "rundown" and "decrepit." He recounted seeing

“[t]iles falling everywhere from the main building, the classroom, to the gym.” The facilities in his words never had “a break” like at other schools where a two or three month break provided an opportunity for a janitorial staff to come in and service the building and grounds. Instead, at VHS, the year-round conditions prevented this: “You couldn’t do it during the summer. You couldn’t do it during the two weeks that you have for winter break. You couldn’t do it even at night because you have night school.” It was this situation with the facilities that prompted Jesse to become involved in a lawsuit aimed at illustrating the inequities of public education in urban school and garnering restitution from the state of California, a lawsuit known as the Williams case.

Williams lawsuit. Beginning in 2000, over 100 students who attended school in San Francisco county joined together in a class action lawsuit against the state of California (California Department of Education, 2011). *Eliezer Williams, et al., vs. State of California, et al.*, which became known as the *Williams* case, declared the state of California failed to provide public school students in low-income communities with equal access to textbooks, qualified teachers, and adequate facilities (California Department of Education, 2011). In 2004, the *Williams* case was settled in favor of the plaintiff with the stipulation that the state of California would provide over 900 million dollars to public schools in low-income communities so that these schools could purchase enough instructional materials for their students and repair educational facilities (California Department of Education, 2011).

Members of the VHS community became involved in the *Williams* case by being contacted by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the organization that

spearheaded the filing of the lawsuit. Melissa recalled receiving a call from a lawyer from the ACLU, who was interested in speaking with teachers from VHS about the conditions on their campus. Melissa and the lawyer from the ACLU set up a meeting and invited VHS staff to attend. About 25 to 30 teachers met with the lawyer off campus at a restaurant to discuss the situation at VHS.

Among the teachers who participated in that first meeting were Melissa, Jesse, and Adriana. Of the 3, Melissa, a community elder participant, and Jesse, a teacher participant, went on to give depositions in the case. As Jesse recalled, among the main things he was concerned about was the lack of textbooks for his students.

State audit. Another reform implemented at VHS was an audit by the California Department of Education. A few community elders spoke about the period of time during what they termed “the state audit.” Melissa offered that the state audit “was really good.” She participated with Adriana on a committee around communications and agreed with the findings presented by the auditors. However, she felt that there was no follow through with the recommendations of committee members or auditors: “[E]verything that we recommended, we were told, ‘There’s no money for that.’ Even though the recommendations followed exactly on what the state had said we should do.” In her mind, this experience with the state audit illustrated that VHS “was really abandoned by the district.”

Reconstitution. Indeed, the last school reform effort aimed at VHS, reconstitution, exposed the fissures between those who were willing to “rock the boat” and those who would go along with reform efforts. While a number of staff members

joined together to try to stop the reconstitution, a greater number of staff members went along with the reconstitution.

The topic of the reconstitution was on the minds of the participants, as they spoke often without prompting about the experiences of that year. For Hugo, the reconstitution put a halt to a reform effort that he felt was working, small learning communities:

We had all this time to develop small learning communities. We got to know our students. We got to know our teachers. And by no follow through, what do they do after four years? They say well this isn't working out. Well, good golly, give us some time. We started to improve our test scores. We started to get some programs that were continuing. Now they just threw it all out and start over.

In Hugo's words, the reconstitution halted gains made under the small learning communities and robbed the "soul" of VHS.

With the reconstitution, the school, in Hugo's opinion, changed greatly. As he said, there was a new schedule that "reduces class time by 25%" and new teachers who "don't know the students" and "don't know each other." In his opinion, the reconstitution occurred because the school district superintendent was trying to earn money from Obama's Race to the Top program. As he said, "If you have a race you're going to have a bunch of losers. Only one person wins the race. One Superbowl winner. Everybody else is a loser, right?" Well, in his mind, VHS wound up the loser on the bottom because of the reconstitution.

In Melissa's opinion, reconstitution presented an "easy way" because it faulted teachers. However, she argued, "Nobody looked at the complex relationships between the kids, the parents, the teachers, the school... Easy just to wipe it clean and say start over... Well, but what are you wiping out?"

For Carl, the reconstitution marked a low point in his career as he reflected on his teaching and his career path. Carl wrote a letter to himself, which he decided to email out to a list of VHS teachers. The letter in turn went “viral” as it spread to inboxes, was posted to the “Save [Victory]” website, and even was posted on a national blog. The letter changed Carl’s life. He began to contribute regularly to the “Save [Victory]” website. He became a member of a national reform organization named “Teachers Letter to Obama” and he started his own crusade to share information and to fight reconstitutions in the school district and across the nation: “VHS was definitely a test. This is a test out here. And it’s already spreading to other LAUSD schools.” Offering insight, support, and example, Carl continued to email and blog regularly. As he said, “I vowed to... tell the truth and the truth can be construed differently. My version of the truth is different from the media’s version.”

Resistance to reform efforts. Over the years, participants, particularly community elders, spoke of how faculty members became resistant to the number of reforms that were used at VHS. As Joyce recalled, the teachers became “very negative and resistant to change.” In some pockets of the campus, this resistance to change prompted a number of teachers to organize and fight against reform efforts. In other pockets of the campus, the faculty went along with reform efforts. All told, a complex campus dynamic developed that divided faculty in some aspects but united them in others.

Carl and Melissa found themselves among the group of teachers who fought against reform efforts. Carl recalled how these teachers fought against district reforms, such as the implementation of the block schedule, as well as the teacher’s union at times.

Joyce and Silvia saw themselves as part of the group of teachers who went along with school reform. Joyce said she was always very “congenial” and “versatile” so she would go along with reforms rather than “rock the boat.”

With a faculty made up of over 200 teachers on a year-round campus, it became difficult to paint one portrait of the school’s relationship to reform efforts. In some participants’ minds, teachers’ reactions to change often highlighted latent issues experienced by the staff. For example, Melissa spoke of how after the teacher’s union strike in 1989, faculty fragmented along union and non-union lines. Jesse spoke of the idea that race played a role in whether teachers supported or resisted reforms. In Jesse’s view, African American teachers were less likely to join in resistance against reform efforts. Age of faculty members may have also played a role as both Jesse and Carl related how older, veteran teachers were less likely to resist reform efforts than newer teachers.

Media Blames Victims and Obfuscates Policies and Laws

Many participants had personal interactions with the media. Six participants had been interviewed by media during the 20-year span of the study, and all six had been quoted within some type of media report, either as a newspaper article, radio interview, or television news broadcast. One participant had submitted a correction to a *Los Angeles Times* report about VHS and its AP Calculus exam. The correction was subsequently published in the paper, but was attributed to the LAUSD. Finally, two participants utilized technology in an effort to publish alternative narratives to VHS’ Reconstitution in

2010. One of these participants created and maintained two websites, while the other one participated as a contributor to the websites.

All told, participants had strong viewpoints about the way in which VHS was portrayed in the media, owing in part to their personal experiences. Several participants spoke of similarities and differences between Spanish language media, including newspapers and television news.

From conversations with participants about media portrayals of VHS, four main findings were discovered. First, participants agreed media reports of VHS focused on the negative aspects of the school, students, teachers, and community. Second, participants identified the complexity of the VHS school and community, which prevented reporters, whom already work on tight deadlines, from spending a large period of time at the school in order to construct a deeper, more nuanced view of VHS. In short, participants felt that reporters portrayed themselves as “experts” on VHS, when they spent only a few hours there for any given story. Third, participants acknowledged that media reports negatively impacted VHS students, teachers, and community by reducing morale and bolstering negative views of the school. Fourth, participants ruminated on the reasons for the media’s negative, shallow coverage of VHS, agreeing that the media sought to portray the school in opposition to other more affluent schools in the city and by doing this aided in maintaining the status quo of race, class, and power in the city. This fourth finding emerged from conversations with participants, many of whom demonstrated an awareness of current events surrounding education. As such, this finding served to assist

in answering the third research question and to provide a starting point for the concluding chapter of this study.

Media focus on the negative. Participants felt that media focused on the negative aspects, rather than the positive aspects of VHS.

Gabriel spoke of how the media focused on the negative, which was not the “real” VHS. For example, he said, “There’s a lot of really good things going on at [Victory]. Yet they just focus on the negative things that go on at the school.” He felt that there were more “positive than negative things going on” at the school. This inability to provide positive aspects also framed the way the school was viewed. Gabriel said the media “played a huge role in the way that people see the school.” Yet, no matter how much the school improved, the media’s portrayal became the one that is most often believed, as if media “were the ultimate...experts.”

This negative portrayal, for some participants, prevented a deeper discussion of other challenges in the school and community. For instance, Silvia commented that since she retired, she “just heard about the low test scores, and the staff is insufficient...just everything negative.” In her opinion, the media was “putting a lot of blame on the teachers more so than the students, but the teachers can only do so much.” The challenges in the school connected to challenges in the community, challenges that Silvia was not sure how to solve, although she commented on how she prays often for VHS and the surrounding community.

Penny spoke of her various experiences with the media. She found that reporters would interview her, but then utilize only a small portion of what she said. Instead,

reporters would highlight the voices of district or school officials, allowing their comments to occupy more space in the story. As a result, a more negative view of the school would emerge. This negativity “not only hurt us but it just like gave other students other things to say about the school.” Penny did not feel “a positive vibe from the news.” Instead, she felt the media “supported the people with money, and we were just like, ‘What about the students?’ I felt like our voices were not really being heard out there, even though that’s where we go to school.”

Troy viewed the media’s portrayal of VHS as linked to a larger view of the community around the campus. In his opinion, most schools in the South Central area were portrayed in a “negative way.” For instance, the media portrayed these schools as if when you attend them, “you would get shot or something like that, or beaten or something like that.” Despite positive changes made at the school, the media continued to focus on negative aspects of the school and community, including gangs and violence. It is in Troy’s view symptomatic of the way the media portrayed the entire community.

Joyce also spoke of the media’s negativity toward VHS. She attributed this to the fact that the media wanted to compare VHS with other schools in the city, a prospect that was like comparing “apples and oranges,” essentially “two different categories.” Students at VHS received a lot of support from teachers, but unfortunately, in Joyce’s view, the challenges of peer pressure and poverty affected their ability to be successful. Journalists could not tackle these more difficult problems, so journalists chose to “scapegoats” the teachers, pointing to them as the reason for the students’ and school’s failings.

Media portrays the surface. Melissa said, “So I think the media doesn’t see the deeper story... They only see the surface.” She related a number of examples. The media “don’t see the kids who may have been real resistant when they were students but come back years later.” They don’t see the successes students experienced after leaving VHS. As Melissa commented, “You know, I went to a graduation... for one of our gang kids who got his certificate to be a helicopter mechanic and is making more money than I’ll ever make.” The media “don’t see what success is” and “I’m not sure that they can.” Melissa went on to relate stories of teachers who helped students attend universities, such as Berkeley and Brown.

Adriana felt that media accounts of VHS did not go beyond the surface of a story. She said, “You cannot just go to school and interview a couple of people and write an article based on that.” For many reasons, reporters brought their own bias to the school.

As Adriana said:

It’s very difficult for these people to understand that there is another reality, and there are many people living in a different way, and these people, ... if they are reporters or they are lawyers or they are this, they are professionals, and they come for one day to [Victory] just because it happened that they need to come. They don’t understand anything.

For example, Adriana related a few stories of different visitors coming to the campus. Often, visitors are surprised that the school not only looks like a school, but that it operated like one as well. Also, visitors often wondered if their car, parked either on the street or in the campus parking lot, would be safe. These stereotypes clouded the viewpoints of reporters who portrayed the school and community, and often emerged in the media accounts.

Hugo remembered when a *Los Angeles Times* reporter spent what “seemed like six months” on the VHS campus. “He was visiting sometimes half the day going visiting and he never visited my class; [h]e never talked to me.” Hugo went away for the summer and when he returned, he read the article:

I wanted to see what he wrote about us and one of the comments was no one from [Victory] had ever passed the AP Calculus exam. Now passing is a three. The scores are one, two, three, four, and five. So I wrote a letter to the editor and they looked it up and they said they could make a correction. And it was a little correction. [Victory] students, I think it said, 14 or 15 have passed the AP calculus exam with scores of three, four, and five with five being the highest. And that was after the parents had a chance to read the article. You’ve got prospective students’ parents saying should I send my child to [Victory]. That’s the media.

As stated earlier, the correction did appear at the beginning of the article entitled, “A School Flails in a Sea of Chaos” but it was attributed to the LAUSD. Nonetheless, as Hugo pointed out reporters often got their facts wrong and corrections come after the publication of the story.

Similar to Hugo, Jessie remembered the same reporter visiting VHS. As he remembered it, the reporter spent a week in his classroom, watching him teach all kinds of math classes, included advanced ones. Yet, the reporter did not choose to portray Jesse or his classroom. As Jesse viewed it, the reporter had “an agenda” and he knew what “he was looking for, and he actually found it.” That same year, Jessie won a Teacher of the Year award.

Negative coverage demoralizes the community. Alumni participants agreed that the media’s portrayal of VHS negatively impacted students. As Gabriel said, it “demoralized” students. The media made students “feel like they want to go to another school.” Not just the English-speaking media, but also the Spanish-speaking media. As Gabriel said, “[I]t’s just a translation of what they say with the English media said. I think

it's exactly the same. They don't say anything different. Because I've seen both and it's pretty much the same thing just in Spanish."

Even teachers participants spoke of the impact of media portraits of VHS on them. Many discussed the negative reaction they received when they told people that they worked at VHS. Carl talked about the reaction he has received: "Oh you work in south Los Angeles... bless you. Like I'm a missionary." In Carl's view, the media's portrayal of VHS contributes to stereotypes that fit "the feel good-story" or "what people want to see." In comparison, Carl pointed to Hollywood films that portrayed inner-city schools. He called VHS the "poster child," a "touchstone" that the media used similar to other repetitive events:

But yeah we're the poster child. It's very convenient. It's a touchstone. Think what we do around Thanksgiving or Christmas. If you're the media you go to skid row. 'Oh look there's the shelter, look.' And then do we think about shelters the rest of the year. No never... But it's not about news. It's about sound bites and selling newspapers. Not even getting people to talk about solutions.

For Jessie, the media's portrayal set VHS up as the "whipping boy," and as he pointed out "most of the people who actually buy the *Los Angeles Times* aren't people in South Los Angeles." In his opinion, people who lived in the "fancier parts of town" pay for the publication, so they want to read stories that make them feel better about their status and place in society. Jesse said, "You always have to have your other, you know." For him, VHS served "an agenda of demonizing the poor side of town, which is in South Central. Unfortunately for our students, that's where they live, right, and so there was – there's always like you have to have someone to whip on, or else how do you feel good about yourself?" Students suffered so that others may sustain their sense and ownership of wealth and privilege.

In many participants' views, the media played a large role in bringing about and supporting the school's Reconstitution in 2010. As Gabriel said, "I'll say a giant role, because at no point did they make it look like there was going to be any...negative repercussions or anything like that, like what they were doing was a positive thing."

Beatriz agreed that the media helped to foster a negative view about the campus and community, making students feel lesser than other students at other schools. She asked, "Why do they do that? What do they have to gain from it?"

Reasons for media's portrayal. Beatriz's question was on the mind of many of the participants, most of whom had survived 2010, a year of intense media scrutiny due to the district's decision to reconstitute the school. Among the replies most common, was that the most prominent local newspaper, the *Los Angeles Times* is anti-union. Jesse, Carl and Melissa both stated this.

Additional replies by participants focused on the need to use VHS to juxtapose against other schools and areas in the city. Jessie thought stories of students served to further advance a narrative about the American dream, one that fit the typical "Horatio Alger's" type of story. As he said, "[B]ecause we're not at the center of power, there's, like you said, there's no way of being able to like give the counter-narrative, and I think some programs at [Victory] were beginning to create their counter narrative."

Adriana spoke about the media fulfilling a need to help perpetuate the economic system in the city and ultimately the country. As she said:

I think the media portrayed [Victory] the same way that—kind of the same way that the district has idea. My feeling, and I know it's very sad to say it, but I think that one of the reasons the district doesn't care about South Central or South LA, whatever name you want to call it...some people live in houses, and they have gardens, or we have gardens, and we need gardeners. So I think that I disagree with the idea that [Victory] is a dropout factory, like one of the reporters in the *LA Times*

called us. I think we are a factory for gardeners, but not because we are doing a bad job... It's just because the district portrays the school that way with not giving us [any] resources.

For Adriana, the media's coverage of VHS helped to protect larger political and business interests in the city, state, and nation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented details about two main courses of research conducted in this study. The first was a critical discourse analysis, using the Discourse Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) of mainstream media texts about Victory High School (VHS), a large comprehensive public school located in South Central Los Angeles. Secondly, I selected participants from the VHS community and interviewed them in an individual interview setting. Some participants also engaged in focus group interviews.

Findings from the first course of research revealed a master narrative about VHS that vilified community members, racialized economic competition, and celebrated neoliberal reform measures. Findings from the second course of research revealed that participants felt academic opportunities in the community declined, economic competition was racialized in the community, and media vilified community members in order to protect business and political interests in the city, state, and nation. Additional discussion of the findings from this chapter will occur in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 5 is organized into four main parts. First, I begin with a summary of this study including its purpose, research questions, literature review, methodology and findings. Second, I offer a discussion of the findings in terms of the three research questions from the study. Third, I explore the implications of this study on the participants, school, community, and field of education. Fourth, I provide some recommendations for future study and action. The chapter concludes with a final reflection on the project and its implications for me, the researcher and educator.

Summary of the Study

Purpose of the Study

Utilizing the theoretical lenses of master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman 1988), this research study unmasked the mainstream media's master narrative, or dominant story, about Victory High School (VHS), a large comprehensive high school located in South Los Angeles, a working class community of color.

Over a time period of 1990 to 2010, mainstream media produced 306 texts discussing VHS and the surrounding community. These texts helped to generate a "manufactured crisis" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) about VHS and the community by focusing on interracial tension, failing test scores, incompetent teachers, and illiterate students. Taken together, these texts created and perpetuated a master narrative (Lyotard,

1984), or totalizing story, that racialized economic competition in the community, scapegoated community members, and exonerated mechanisms of local, state, and national laws and policies. The cohesion of the media's master narrative created a case towards the enactment of multiple educational reform measures at VHS, including reconstitution of the school in 2010.

Through the use of Critical Race Theory's counter storytelling (Yosso, 2006), this study engaged teachers, alumni, and community elders from VHS in interviews in which they talked back to the media's master narrative. The counter-narratives produced by participants told a different story about VHS and the community, in which laws and policies diminished educational opportunities, neoliberal reforms dismantled reserves of VHS's social capital, and media vilified an entire school and community in order to gain consent of the masses for reforms being enacted.

By revealing the mainstream media's master narrative and counter narrating it, this research project functioned to resist hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), to recollect the past for a community that has been oppressed (Yosso, 2006), and to illustrate the effects of destructive educational reforms, such as reconstitution, upon working class communities of color (Ravitch, 2010).

Research Questions

This research study was framed around three questions:

1. What has been the master narrative of Victory High School portrayed through mainstream media accounts, such as newspaper articles and television news footage, during the years 1990-2010?

2. What narratives emerge when Victory High School teachers, alumni, and community elders narrate their personal stories?
3. What interests does the master narrative about Victory High School protect?

Literature Review

Master narrative theory. Multiple stories combined to create one totalizing or big story known as a master narrative (Lyotard, 1984; Stanley, 2007). The master narrative, which could also be called a majoritarian story (Yosso, 2006), functioned as the standard story about a group or community as told by the dominant group (Stanley, 2007). Found throughout the field of education, such as in textbook publications (Alridge, 2006), academic research (Stanley, 2007), and classroom pedagogy (Swartz, 1992), master narratives should be dismantled by first recognizing their existence and then challenging them through the use of local stories told by those most impacted by their presence (Lawless, 2003; Yosso, 2006).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). Developed by legal scholars of color, Critical Race Theory (CRT) existed as framework for understanding how institutions within the United States perpetuate and disseminate racism (Ladson-Billings, 1999). At its core, CRT posited race as a social construction and racism, which is discrimination based on race, as a pervasive fixture in American social, political and judicial institutions (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). In order to understand how racism worked in these institutions, CRT advocates for the use of stories of people of color, who have the best viewpoint on the deployment of racism in these spaces (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Recent scholarship in

CRT has focused on attempting to articulate intersections between race and class (Cole, 2009; Darder & Torres, 2004).

Social capital theory. For Bourdieu (1986) social capital, which represents the benefits derived from being a member of a group, aided in the reproduction of class and societal difference (Bourdieu, 1986). Coleman (1988) defined social capital as the product gained by individuals through their participation in social networks. In educational research, Coleman's definition of social capital has dominated (Portes, 1998), but also has aided in perpetuating a master narrative of deficit about the lack of social capital in working class communities of color (Akom, 2006).

Media and communities of color. Throughout United States history, media in the form of popular literature, movies, television shows, have been used to stereotype people of color (Wilson et al., 2003). Martindale's (1990) study of four newspapers over the years 1950 to 1989 found mixed results, noting some positive changes in coverage of African Americans but also finding some continuing problems, such as omissions of real problems facing African American communities (Martindale, 1990). Newspapers and television news have continued to lack minority representation in management, production and reporting of news (Poindexter et al., 2003).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was passed into law as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). The law mandated each state to develop and implement a standardized assessment system for all public school students. States monitored schools' progress annually based on these assessment systems and schools that

failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress faced a variety of escalating sanctions. Since its implementation, NCLB has been controversial, as many critics have pointed to how it narrows curriculum, pushes out students, and punishes schools in lower income communities (Ravitch, 2010).

Methodology of the Study

This study functioned within a qualitative research framework (Hatch, 2002) and utilized two main research approaches: critical discourse analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and counter-narratives (Yosso, 2006). Purposive sampling, convenience sampling and a nomination process resulted in the selection of 12 participants from the VHS community, each of whom engaged in individual interviews and some of whom engaged in one of two focus group interviews. Follow-up interviews served as an opportunity to member check with participants, which increased the trustworthiness of this study.

Critical discourse analysis. To answer the research questions, this study utilized two methodological approaches. The first was a type of critical discourse analysis known as the Discourse-Historical Approach, which enabled a historical study of discourses across texts in an effort to examine how these discourses changed over time and how links between texts functioned (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). News articles, transcripts from newscasts, and other media about Victory High School were analyzed for the discursive topics, discursive strategies, and linguistic features (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), revealing an historical discourse that scapegoated students, parents, teachers, and community members while exonerating representatives and mechanisms of local, state, and national policy and laws.

Counter-narratives. The second methodological approach was Critical Race Theory's methodology of counter-narratives (Yosso, 2006). Given that race and racism are inherent in American institutions, such as the judicial system, government, and media, Critical Race Theory advanced the use of narratives by people of color in order to hear from those most marginalized by these institutions about their experience (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Setting. Opened in 1924, Victory High School (VHS) was operated by the Los Angeles Unified School District and was located in an area of Los Angeles known as South Central. Once a multiethnic enclave, the area transitioned into predominantly African American in the early 20th century due to increased African American migration from the southern United States and restrictive housing covenants that prevented African Americans from living in any other part of Los Angeles (Sides, 2003). A thriving economic, social, and artistic community flourished around Central Avenue during this time, helping to coin the term South Central for the area (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006).

The 1940s saw increased economic opportunities in this community, as a number of manufacturing plants opened (Sides, 2003). Yet, only about 20 years later in the 1960s, these plants began to migrate out of South Central to suburbs surrounding Los Angeles (Sides, 2003). By the late 1970s, manufacturers had ceased investing in the area, prompting increased unemployment and poverty in the community (Sides, 2003). The 1980s saw the rise of drug trafficking and gang activity in the community, some of which was portrayed by popular mainstream movies such as *Colors* and by rap music by artists

such as Eazy E and Ice Cube (Sides, 2003). Soon the term South Central earned a pejorative meaning (Jimenez y West & Roth, 2006).

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw an increase in Latino immigration into the community of South Central, which became evident in the public school system, particularly at VHS, which transitioned from predominantly African American to Latino in the course of 10 years (Sides, 2003). In 1995, in order to accommodate the burgeoning population of Latino students, VHS went from a traditional calendar to a year-round, multi-track calendar. Seemingly overnight the school population and teaching staff doubled while the span of grades increased to include grades 9, 10, 11 and 12.

Today some 86 years after its opening, VHS has continued to serve students of color. In 2010, the school operated on a year-round, multi-track schedule with over 4,000 students in grades 9 through 12, 250 faculty members, 15 counselors, 25 clerical staff, 70 support staff, five administrators and one principal (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2009a). Most recently, in 2010, the school district superintendent decided to reconstitute the school in accordance with the NCLB Act (2001), and in 2011 the campus re-opened as the first school in LAUSD ever to have undergone reconstitution.

Participants. Participant selection involved the use of purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and a nomination process (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Altogether 12 participants were selected representing three distinct facets of the VHS community: four teacher participants, four alumni participants, and four community elders defined as individuals possessing more than 10 years of experience in the VHS community.

In an effort to hear participants' narratives, I engaged all participants in semi-structured individual interviews. To have participants share their narratives with each other, I engaged participants in two focus group interviews. Follow-up interviews served as time to clarify information shared in other interview settings and to member check with participants. Through the use of member checking with participants, a reflexive journal, a peer debriefer, and triangulation, this study established trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1990).

Findings

Given that this study had two main research approaches, critical discourse analysis and counter-narratives, findings are presented according to each research approach.

Critical discourse analysis. The media's master narrative about Victory High School (VHS) was that it is a failing school and community. The community was low-income, crime ridden, uneducated, and replete with racial tension. The high school was a failing dropout factory that destroys students' chances to achieve the American Dream. Students were low-achieving slackers destined to be workers in the capitalist system. Teachers were incompetent union members who are protected by archaic collective bargaining rights that can and must be revoked. Both the community and school were portrayed as irredeemable.

The only way to redeem this school—and by extension this community—was to start over, to reconstitute it. Such efforts, while an experiment in the school district, were posed as unquestionable opportunities for they diminished teachers' unions, tamed the

threat of students' culture, and restored the public's trust in this institution. Throughout, the victims of the political and legal systems of power were vilified, while the mechanisms and representatives of these systems were exonerated and even lauded for "fixing" this working class community of color.

Participants' counter-narratives. Participants spoke about how shifting demographics in the community intensified economic competition. Due to the departure of the manufacturing industry in the area, the resulting scarcity of jobs pitted African Americans and Latinos in a battle over these limited economic opportunities. Competition over scarce resources even occurred at the school site as long-standing African American community members expressed resentment about the fact that finances and resources were being redirected to Latino students.

The enactment of numerous reform measures by local, state, and federal educational policy and laws destabilized and fragmented a once close-knit school community, producing a loss of trust in the school as an institution of public good and destroying the community's history, cultural memory, and social capital. Participants indicated that changes in state law regarding affirmative action produced a decline in college enrollment and a reduction in additional programs to assist students. The school's conversion to a year-round campus grew the faculty and student body to a point where participants felt they didn't know all the teachers or students on the campus. Most recently, participants expressed sorrow and frustration around the school's reconstitution, a reform they felt ruined the school's cohesion and demolished recent gains in graduation rates and test scores.

According to participants, mainstream media focused only on negative aspects of the community and intensified the impact of reform efforts, scapegoating students, community members, and teachers while eliding the history of the community, the economic realities of capitalism, and the shift to neoliberalism educational policies. Throughout, participants felt mainstream media manufactured a crisis (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) around the community of VHS, so successful as to result in the use by the school district of the harshest penalty of all—reconstitution. This reform, as Hugo, a community elder participant said, ripped the “soul” from the school and practically guaranteed an erasure of communal history, memory, and experiences.

This research project attempted to intervene in the destruction that has been wrought on this working class community of color by offering an opportunity to recollect the memories of the community elders, teachers, and alumni that taught, attended school, and lived in the VHS community. By finally revealing the master narrative hidden all these years within the mainstream media’s discourse about VHS, this project lifted a yoke of oppression that this community bore for too long. In its place, the project offered the words, experiences, and analysis of community members.

Discussion of Findings

By revealing the mainstream media’s master narrative about the VHS community and the interests that this master narrative protects, this study has exposed how a working class community of color was vilified by the media, which operated as both an Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser, 1971) and an instrument of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Through an alignment of the media’s master narrative with participants’

comments, this study has demonstrated how local, state, and federal policies and laws act to injure a working class community of color.

All told, this study demonstrated the multi-pronged attack on communities of color in this country, an attack that deployed racist sentiments in an effort to protect and replicate the political economy of capitalism. In many ways, the mainstream media's master narrative about VHS appended other historical master narratives in this country. The first master narrative was about White supremacy in this country and the second was about the attainment of the American Dream in this country. Additionally, this study revealed that the mainstream media's story about VHS also connects to a more nascent master narrative being developed in this country, that of the benefits of neoliberal reforms.

The following offers a discussion of the findings in relationship to each of the three research questions.

Question 1: What has been the Media's Master Narrative?

The media's master narrative about VHS has focused on the construction of economic competition as interracial tension in an effort to obfuscate class differences and inequities in economic opportunities that began with a decline in manufacturing jobs in the VHS community and across the United States due to globalization, a policy to promote free trade around the world so as to increase economic competition and international capital (Lipman, 2009). By portraying class difference as interracial tension, media discourse burdens community members with solving these problems, while

obfuscating local, state, and federal laws and policies that have brought about economic decline in the community.

Additionally, the media's master narrative vilified VHS community members and the school site through the deployment of a topos of numbers that obfuscated reform measures that have led to the decline of student performance and the increase in high stakes testing situations. Since the NCLB Act (2001) privileged standardized tests scores and quantitative data, in many ways constructing a master narrative that upheld these as the premier way to measure school and student achievement, the media's portrayal of VHS relied on quantitative data as calculated by standardized test scores. In the master narrative about VHS, then, students, parents, and teachers became the scapegoats for the school's failure, while policies, laws, and even economic realities, such as poverty, were obfuscated.

Finally, the media's master narrative celebrated neoliberal reforms, such as reconstitution. By creating a topos of burdening or weighing down, the media facilitated the manufacture of a crisis about VHS, one that converged with the interests of the Obama Administration to enact reconstitutions in working class communities of color where schools are lowest performing as measured by state standardized test scores. Without portraying any of the consequences of enacting reconstitution, the media assisted in encouraging the spread of this reform, an occurrence that has already taken place this year with the school district's decision to reconstitute four additional schools.

Question 2: What Narratives Emerge from Participants?

Community elder participants spoke about a time in VHS history when the community felt close-knit and opportunities for students seemed plentiful. The enactment of a number of reforms, including the year-round schedule, reduced the cohesion of faculty and students, while overcrowding dilapidated facilities. The passage of state laws such as Proposition 209 diminished students' chances to enroll in college and earn scholarships due to affirmative action, a path to offer restitution to traditionally under-represented students and their communities.

In addition, participants spoke of the way in which economic competition for school site resources became racialized. Just as the community was experiencing the same phenomenon, the school site experienced an increase in tension over finite funds for students. African Americans, who had been the predominant group in the community for many years, sought to protect resources for these students. However, influxes of Latino immigrants, many of whom were Spanish speaking, resulted in the need to redirect more funds to these students. This competition over economic resources resulted in tension and violence that became racialized on the campus.

Participants narrated the implementation of numerous reform efforts at the school, many of which depleted social capital, such as the year-round schedule, state audit, and reconstitution. These reform efforts injured the community and produced a loss of trust among all community members. Participants also offered stories about resisting these reform efforts through protests, participation in the *Williams* case, and even the use of new technologies such as blogs.

Question 3: What Interests Are Protected by the Master Narrative?

Additionally, this project demonstrated the interests that the media's master narrative has protected. By aligning three timelines, the media's discourse about VHS, participants' stories, and state and federal laws and policies, this project illustrated that the master narrative has served to protect capitalist, anti-immigrant, and neoliberal interests, all of which have been deployed by conservative think tanks, government, business groups, and "the billionaire boys club," philanthropists who engage in educational reform (Ravitch, 2010).

Three timelines served the purpose of demonstrating what interests were protected by the master narrative. The first timeline represented the mainstream media's coverage of events in the VHS community during the years 1990-2010. The second timeline represented the experiences narrated by the participants over the timeframe of 1990-2010. The third timeline represented an overview of state and federal policies and laws that occurred during the time period under study, 1990-2010. Table 9 presents all three timelines:

Figure 1

Three Timelines: Mainstream Media, VHS Participants' Narratives, Local/State/Federal Laws and Policies

1990	Case Study #1 "Changing the Face of South LA"	1992	Case Study #2 "Ground Zero"	1996	Case Study #3 "Teaching It Faster and Smarter"	2002	Case Study #4 "A School Fails in a Sea of Chaos"	2006	Case Study #5 "A Path from a Dropout Factory"	2009	Case Study #6 "Cortines Unveils Plans to Dismantle and Rebuild [VHS]"
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Mainstream Media Texts

Late 1980s-early 1990s Shift in Demographics	1992 Riots	1996-1998 Access to College & Bilingual Education Limited	2002-2003 State Audit	2004-2006 CAHSEE Implementation	2009-2010 School Reconstitution
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VHS Participants' Narratives

1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)	1992 Acquittal Rodney King Case	1994 CA Prop 187	1996 CA Prop 209	1998 CA Prop 227	1999 CA Public School Accountability Act (PSAA)	2004-2006 CAHSEE Implementation	2009 Obama Administration & Race to the Top
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Local/State/Federal Laws and Policies

Looking across the three timelines, three main interests emerged. These interests related to the racialization of economic competition.

Racialization of Economic Competition

In the first portion along the timeline, the mainstream media provided a text that offered a racialized and polarized discourse about the increase in Latino immigrants into the African American community of South Central. The article portrayed how African Americans and Latinos were competing for jobs in an area where disinvestment of manufacturing companies occurred (Sides, 2003). Additionally, the article portrayed the rise of Latino immigrants into the middle class through the purchase of homes, a phenomenon that previously had occurred for African Americans in this community, many of whom were now fleeing the community.

Latino immigrants' move into this community was portrayed positively, as the Latino journalist wrote nostalgically about a time in the history of the city when the community near Watts was predominantly Latino. Then, just as now, the community always has been a beacon for working class people of color precisely because the cost of housing was so low and historically housing covenants prevented home ownership in other parts of Los Angeles (Sides, 2003). While the demographics changed, the narrative did not—working class people of color battle each other to climb the economic ladder to achieve the American Dream.

The counter-narratives produced by participants told a different story about VHS and the community, in which laws and policies diminished educational opportunities, neoliberal reforms dismantled reserves of VHS's social capital, and media vilified an

entire school and community in order to gain consent of the masses for reforms being enacted.

Community elder participants spoke of the shift in demographics that occurred in the community surrounding VHS. Marking the years of the late 1980s to the early 1990s, participants spoke of the shift from a student population that was primarily African American to a student population that became almost totally Latino. In this shift, Latino immigrants arrived in need of additional supports, including instructional support in English, assistance with immigration status, and help navigating the pathway to college, particularly if a student was undocumented. In addition to the demographics shift, the community experienced a shift in class, as the African American families that had been categorized as middle class moved out and Latino immigrants arrived from poor rural areas, often as refugees of war or as undocumented immigrants. This shift coincided with the departure of blue-collar jobs from the community, due to the loss of the manufacturing industry in South Central. In sum, economic conditions occurred that compelled a shift of the community from middle class to lower class.

Research about local, state, and federal policies and laws during this time revealed the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 by the Reagan administration. This law provided amnesty to immigrants who had been living in the United State prior to 1986, penalized employers for hiring undocumented workers, and required non-discrimination in hiring immigrant workers (Gerkin, 2007). As evidenced in the first case study, the article entitled “Changing the Face of South Los Angeles” (Tobar, 1990) illustrated how Latino immigrant families were able to purchase homes after

receiving citizenship through IRCA. The article, though, never addressed the shift of Latinos into the community as a byproduct of IRCA, choosing instead to omit the law and its ramifications.

Instead of articulating the laws and policies that changed the face of South Los Angeles, the article instead constructed a dichotomy between the industrious Latino immigrant workers and the seemingly entitled African American workers. Used to blue-collar work, African Americans lost their jobs in droves, especially as factories closed in South Central Los Angeles. Yet, this occurred across the country during Reagan's tenure as factories were closed, corporate taxes were cut in half, and owners' profits soared (Moore, 2009). Unions, such as the air traffic controller's union, were broken (Moore, 2009). The attack on the middle-class began, but no group fared worse than African Americans. Not only did middle-class African Americans lose their jobs, but the gains of the civil rights movement of the 1960s began to be rolled backwards, as conservative agendas began to deploy a variety of neoliberal policies to undermine these gains. For example, in November 1996, Californians passed Proposition 209, which ended affirmative action in government employment and at public universities (Ravitch, 2010).

Yet, Latino families would also face additional challenges in the 1990s. Among the consequences of IRCA, was an increase in anti-immigrant sentiments, which were evident in mainstream media discourse (Gerkin, 2007). Certainly, this phenomenon could be seen in the *Los Angeles Times* editorial about bilingual education, an article that appeared in 1996, two years after the passage of Proposition 187, about nine months

before the passage of Proposition 209, and two years before the passage of Proposition 227, which would end the practice of bilingual education in California (Gerkin, 2007).

Riots. Indeed, the racialization of economic competition erupted on April 28, 1992. The decision by jurists to acquit four Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers in the beating of Rodney King sparked major riots in the community in and around VHS. Participants in the riots targeted Korean owned businesses, looting and burning these most frequently. Korean business owners purchased liquor stores and other shops in and around the area of South Central. The ability of this minority group to move up in the United States racialized economic hierarchy brought resentment and anger, as did the shooting of 15-year old Latasha Harlins by a Korean storeowner who accused her of theft (Oliver, Johnson, & Farrell, 1993). These developments, coupled with the jurors' decision to acquit four White LAPD officers, engendered rage and chaos.

The only article to address the aftermath of the riots in relationship to VHS appeared October 28, 1992, as CBS news produced one television news broadcast. The text provided a bleak portrayal of the VHS community, a portrait of a community without resources, economic opportunities, or, in many ways, hope. Students were portrayed as cynical, especially about the presence of local, state, and national politicians. Briefly touched on were the Watts Riots that occurred in 1965 south from VHS, yet the comparison couldn't be more important, a repeated cycle of legal injustice that erupted into violence and resulted in further "punishment" by the governance, legal, and economic systems. The text concluded by offering an image of an evening VHS football game in which the players did not emerge victorious, while the journalist stated

“sometimes just wanting to win isn’t enough.” It was a veiled threat to a community that has never won, a threat that the lack of jobs, lack of opportunities, and supposed lack of hope is deserved, for this community only wanted to win rather than putting in the work to earn the right to win.

Naturally, participants spoke of their experiences with the riots of April 1992. Teacher participants, such as Carl, who worked at a nearby middle school recalled being told by school police officers to leave the community quickly. An alumni participant, Gabriel, remembered staying home and watching television, even thinking that this was “nothing” compared to the crime and violence he had witnessed during the civil war in El Salvador. For several days, Melissa said, the school was closed. While the experiences varied, participants offered insight into the aftermath of the riots for VHS, that is to say they spoke about what they did in their classrooms after the riots occurred.

More importantly, was what participants did not say. No one spoke about a rush of local, state, or federal aid to the South Central community. No one spoke of a concerted effort by the school district to deploy resources to aid students, families and teachers, all of whom were processing the causes and effects of the riots. No one spoke of any marked difference, of any change to be enacted for this community. Left on its own, the community was seemingly forgotten by the institutions that had played a role in bringing about the riots.

Writ large, the riots’ aftermath was never captured in the CBS news broadcast. The dearth of jobs in the community began long before 1992 as the major manufacturing plants in the community shut down and the local economy was left depleted. Service

jobs, such as the ones that the students looked for in the CBS news broadcast, were the only opportunities available in the area, but even these became more scarce after the riots as a number of companies disinvested in the community, a fact that was never reversed by any of the local, state, or national politicians that visited.

In some ways, the media's narrative suggested that this community got what it deserved for its violent behavior, a more bleak economic situation than it had before. Yet, the community suffered the injustices—the inability of the legal system to prosecute White police officers for beating an African American man and the inability of the American political economy to provide economic opportunities for this community.

Anti-immigrant sentiments. The passage of the IRCA and the subsequent increase in illegal immigration created a backlash that could be seen and felt in the media's master narrative and participants' stories in the 1990s (Gerkin, 2007). The *Los Angeles Times* editorial "Bilingual Education: Teaching It Faster and Smarter" (1996) posited a narrative that Latino immigrants should learn English "faster and smarter," deploying a racialized discourse that positioned people of color as deficient in intelligence, a discourse that goes back to the 1800s and has been used to wreak injustice, oppression, and violence on communities of color throughout American history (Horsman, 1981). The article's bias toward eliminating bilingual education envelops VHS by using the low-performance of its "English-only students" as evidence for implementing English immersion classes so that the "transition to English" could go faster. Again this discourse blamed the victims of society's injustices and economic situation, for the English-only students at VHS were African American.

In follow-up interviews, teacher participants, Adriana and Jesse, spoke of the turbulence caused by the spate of anti-immigration propositions that appeared in the 1990s. In 1994, Proposition 187 passed, which required that public agencies, including schools, screen individuals for proof of legal residence prior to receiving services (Garcia, 1995). As Jesse recalled, protests roiled the VHS community, as students walked out to express their anger against the proposition, which eventually was declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court and never implemented.

In 1996, Proposition 209, banning the use of affirmative action in hiring decisions by public agencies and in college admissions, passed and was upheld by the courts. This law changed the landscape of college opportunities for VHS students, as discussed by Hugo, a community elder, and by Adriana, a teacher participant. Without affirmative action, VHS students had a more difficult time being accepted into college. Additionally, in 1991 the court decision of *Bradford v. UC Regents* rolled back the rights of undocumented students to attend colleges and universities in the state of California (Madera, 2010). All of these laws impacted VHS students' opportunities to go on to higher education and contributed to a decline in the college-going population of the school.

The passage of Proposition 227 in 1998 (Kerchner et al., 2008) resulted after the *Los Angeles Times'* editorial about bilingual education. This law effectively ended the use of bilingual education and required schools to utilize English immersion programs for non-English speaking students.

Adriana, a teacher participant, who helped to start many bilingual education programs, and knew the VHS bilingual program spoke about the impact of this law on the community. According to her, VHS had a very good bilingual program. After the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998 (Kerchner et al., 2008), VHS attempted to maintain its bilingual program, having parents of participating students sign a waiver stating that they wanted their students to receive instruction in their primary language. While this helped to keep the program growing, Adriana stated that it nevertheless reduced the size of the program. Around the same time, VHS administrators decided to move all students in the bilingual program to one track, B-track. Adriana noted how this decision injured the bilingual program because it reduced its reach and pushed students onto a track that had frequent stops and starts to the semester. In her opinion, the decision by administrators was “illegal” because it denied access of students to a particular program that was following legal guidelines. In fact, in 2006, the larger school district determined this policy to be inequitable, and required the school to operate its bilingual program on two tracks, instead of one.

Around the same time, other laws aided in curtailing the access of immigrant students to educational opportunities. The 1996 Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act prevented undocumented students from paying in-state tuition and from receiving financial aid (Madera, 2010). The passage of a California law known as AB 540 in 2001 enabled undocumented students to pay in-state tuition for state college or universities, provided they graduated from a high school in California (Madera, 2010).

Adriana and other participants, such as Jesse, spoke of helping students to utilize this law so that they could continue their education.

Yet, these undocumented students unfortunately continue to be denied the chance to apply for state or federal financial aid. The Dream Act, which could enable undocumented students to receive state or federal financial aid and to obtain U.S. citizenship upon completion of a degree, was close to passing in California state and most recently in December 2010 the federal legislature, but has not yet passed at time of publication (Madera, 2010). According to Adriana, with the nation's poor economy and tremendous anti-immigrant feelings, the Dream Act will not pass any time soon.

Indeed, recent articulations of anti-immigrant sentiments have appeared during the United States' economic recession, reminding us that they are always there under the surface in a country that seeks cheap pools of laborers to keep its world economic power, but desires to injure, oppress, and vilify these people for their culture, language, and skin color. Now, as in the 1990s, conservative think tanks and politicians deploy anti-immigration sentiments and enact anti-immigration laws, all in an effort to retain the power and wealth of the dominant group, which in this country is White, male, Christian, and heterosexual (Garcia, 1995).

Neoliberal Reform Efforts

The state audit of VHS figures prominently in a lengthy text by the *Los Angeles Times*. The text portrayed the school as low performing. Teachers were portrayed as unqualified, and the curriculum they taught criticized as not rigorous. Students were

described as illiterate. At least one fact was known to be wrong, as evidenced by the correction that appeared at the beginning of the article.

Participants spoke of the state audit as at first an exciting opportunity to enact meaningful reforms at the school and then as a frustrating exercise in dealing with local district and state bureaucracy. Melissa spoke of expectations that it would result in “real” substantive changes at the school, but instead resulted in only rhetoric. Committees made suggestions for changes, but local school district representatives indicated there were no funds to support suggested changes.

Throughout the media’s coverage no mention was made of the mechanism that triggered the reform. Persistently low-test scores were offered as the reason, but the cause behind the effect of the audit was never mentioned.

Research indicated that the audit was more than likely triggered by the passage of the Public School Accountability Act by California’s state legislature in 1999 (Bitter et al., 2005). This law was the precursor to the No Child Left Behind Act, which was passed at the federal level in 2001 (Bitter et al., 2005). As the precursor, this law implemented a system of accountability measures for state public schools, which was known as the Academic Performance Index and which assigned each school a numeric score based on the results of students’ performance on standardized test results (Bitter et al., 2005). In addition, the law included a provision known as the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program, which identified schools whose students scored the lowest on state standardized tests for two years and targeted these schools to receive

additional funds and resources to create action plans for improving student performance (Bitter et al., 2005).

Most likely, the article entitled “A School Flails in a Sea of Chaos” (Colvin, 2002) detailed the results of VHS’s identification for the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program and subsequent course of action taken to assist the school in improving students’ performance on state standardized tests. Yet, this background was completely elided from the article; even the government agency conducting the audit was not named. Instead, the state auditors appeared almost magically serving in the role of saving the students from the horrible teachers.

In fact, the students needed saving from the political and legal institutions of the state audit. This article appeared in 2002, just after the implementation of the NCLB Act (2001). Among the first initiatives deployed by the NCLB Act was the Reading First initiative, which required schools to adopt a reading program (Ravitch, 2010). In the text from the *Los Angeles Times*, literacy and the lack thereof for VHS students was a focal point.

Since its enactment in 2002, the Reading First initiative has been criticized for funding a number of private corporations, some of which made standardized tests and standardized reading programs (Ravitch, 2010). This criticism has even focused on connections of these corporations to local, state, and even federal politicians (Ravitch, 2010).

In fact, NCLB ushered in a new era of privatization into education. Private corporations seized on the moment to provide testing services, curriculum, and even

reorganization programs to low-performing schools (Ravitch, 2010). At VHS, private corporations cycled in and out of the school, pedaling curriculum, tests, and other services. At times, such as in 2005, when the First Things First organization appeared to help reorganize the school, teachers balked and fought back, and in some cases, such as this, successfully repelled the presence of such organizations. At other times, though, such as the district's adoption of Pearson's, a testing manufacturer, curriculum planning model, VHS teachers engaged and participated in the newest articulation of an educational fad.

What became clear was that the NCLB Act inextricably linked public education with private corporations, through the advancement of standardized testing, literacy programs, and even charter schools.

Corporate interests in education. After the state audit, the mainstream media's narrative about VHS remained negative, portraying the school as low-performing and failing. The article "From a Dropout Factory to UC Berkeley" (Banks, 2006) did not diverge from this narrative. Instead, the article strengthened the narrative by linking the school to the moniker of "dropout factory." This term became among the media's most popular naming strategies for the school.

In the text, one student, the valedictorian, was portrayed as possessing an individual work ethic and determination that enable her to succeed despite the problems that plagued the school. Luz earned her accomplishment as valedictorian with the help of other students, such as Diana, and even her family. Teachers were elided from the discourse of those who aided Luz in her accomplishment. Even the portrait of Luz's

family was questionable, as it offered that college counselors serve as “surrogate parents,” commenting on the lack of formal education and the lack of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that Latino immigrant families had to offer their children. Instead, parents, such as Luz’s parents, were portrayed as workers, working around the clock to provide for their families, while the reasons why—capitalism and its need for cheap labor—were never explored.

The text connects Luz’s success to that of the American dream, as her individual fortitude aided her in achieving this. In contrast to that, are Luz’s classmates, many of whom would only earn certificates of completion, since this graduating class was the first time that the California High School Exit Exam results would be used to determine seniors’ eligibility to graduate. These students, due their own inability to work hard, were portrayed as being left behind.

Participants spoke of this portrait of VHS, as a school “failing” its students and community. Among the challenges faced by the school community was the decision in 1994 to expand the school to grades 9 through 12 and to operate the school as a three-track, year-round campus. This decision made by local school district officials compromised the school’s close-knit social structure and capacity to provide consistent quality educational opportunities. It was as Melissa, a community elder participant, who said, this was the moment when the community lost its “trust” in the school. Yet, participants were powerless to do anything about the decision. Instead, they struggled to find even basic necessities such as books and to provide adequate learning conditions for students, such as air conditioning and non-dilapidated building conditions.

Adding to the campus' operations was the institution of standardized tests. First standardized tests measured students' and the school's overall performance and then in 2006 the implementation of the high school exit exam insured that a standardized test determined graduation. Continual reform efforts implemented year after year destabilized the school even to a greater extent, and essentially made the school fodder for media accounts documenting its low test scores without ever revealing the historical timelines of both the school and the policies and laws that had led up to this status.

Historical research revealed that the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) was implemented under state law in order to comply with the mandates of the NCLB Act (Ravitch, 2010). Additionally, the exit exam came about as leaders from higher institutes of learning and business spoke of the paucity of skills with which high school graduates entered college and the workforce (Ravitch, 2010). One look at the English section of a CAHSEE and the interests it serves are clear. Littered among the reading passages are recipes, instructional manuals, and directions for operating machinery, the very thing workers need to be able to read and understand.

The rise of neoliberalism within public school policy emphasized individual responsibility rather than collective responsibility. Private companies began to rake in public funds through the development and sale of instructional materials, curricular programs, and standardized assessments (Ravitch, 2010). The shift toward state testing that occurred with the passage in California of the Public School Accountability Act in 1999 (Bitter et al., 2005) and the NCLB in 2001 at the federal level pushed schools to

narrow the curriculum in order to “teach to the test” and spike students’ test scores (Ravitch, 2010).

Throughout, the corporately owned mainstream media aided and abetted politicians and business people, offering a vehicle through which to stir up widespread outrage about public schools. Additionally, the media became implicated in the success of NCLB, for it published test results for schools, and most recently for teachers.

Obama administration. In 2009, the mainstream media provided extensive coverage of the LAUSD superintendent’s decision to reconstitute VHS. The announcement coincided with a visit by Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education under the Obama administration, who utilized reconstitution as a reform measure during his stint as head of the Chicago public schools and now advanced it as policy under the Obama administration and its new program, Race to the Top.

Within the text, the decision appeared as a natural repercussion to the persistent failure of VHS, a necessary ends to rid the school of teachers whom for too long thwarted change and hid behind union protections. A topos, or logic, of a few repeated numbers justified the decision as did the superintendent’s desire to improve the “look” of students’ who often showed their “midriffs” and permitted their pants to sag below their “ass” (Blume, 2009). The venom for the students’ culture became clear and the reconstitution offered a cleaning of the slate, a closing and reopening of the school so as to eliminate threats.

As the narrative continued into July 2010 with the actual re-opening of the school under reconstitution, the media offered VHS as a “grand experiment,” that should be

repeated throughout the city, state and nation. Dubbed the “[Victory] initiative,” politicians, such as the mayor, celebrated the decision and sought its deployment elsewhere. This clarion call was successful, as at the date of this publication, at least four other schools in the LAUSD were slated for reconstitution for the school year 2011–2012. The school district moved rapidly, from enacting one reconstitution to four reconstitutions, without any measurements of the success or failure of such a policy.

The reconstitution was a source of pain for many of the participants, some of whom fought against it and two of whom felt it ended their educational career. While the pain was apparent in interviews with participants, their words expressed the problems of such policy. For community elder Hugo, who has taught at the school for 45 years, the decision ripped out the school’s “heart and soul.” For others, such as Carl, the decision was punishment for cultivating a strong presence of the teachers’ union and for teachers’ numerous agitations against district policies. For two others, teacher participant Jesse and former student Beatriz, the reconstitution compelled them to participate in efforts to open a new high school in the area. At the time of publication, Jesse, Beatriz, and a cooperative group of other VHS teachers were awarded the right to operate the new school under the district’s Public School Choice policy, a mechanism that opened schools up for proposal by any operator, public or private, and enabled the school board to choose who operated the school.

The decision to reconstitute VHS emerged at a moment in time when education as a public good was under attack. Neoliberal education policies that focused on privatizing public goods, such as schools, were enacted in communities across the country (Ravitch,

2010). In Chicago, reconstitution decisions by the school district were linked to local housing authority decisions about public housing (Hess, 2003). Schools were selected for reconstitution based on the desires of housing authorities, and the result of such decision was a massive displacement of working class people of color and an influx of middle-class Whites, an example of protecting the interests of gentrification (Hess, 2003). Recent decisions in Los Angeles, especially to rebuild a public housing facility in Watts and then to reconstitute the school nearby appear to be following a similar trajectory.

Summary of Discussion

By aligning the media's master narrative, participants' stories, and historical research around the local, state, and federal laws and policies enacted during 1990 to 2010 (see Table 9), the interests protected by the master narrative can be exposed. These interests related to the racialization of economic competition and neoliberal reform efforts that are spreading throughout the country.

Implications of the Study

This research study had a variety of implications for participants, VHS, the surrounding community, the field of education, and society at large. Yosso (2006) asserted that the sharing of counter stories contributed four effects to individuals and their community: a) builds community; b) challenges majoritarian stories and those who benefit from them; c) fosters community cultural memory and resistance; and 4) enacts changes in education. In this study, each of these four effects occurred.

Implications for Participants

Participants indicated that their participation resulted in building community, challenging majoritarian stories and the interests they protect, and cultivating the community's shared history (Yosso, 2006). For instance, participants appreciated the opportunity to share their stories with me and other participants in focus group interviews. One community elder participant, Melissa, expressed the loss and regret she felt leaving VHS in June 2010 and retiring. By providing stories and insights to this project, Melissa described how it helped her to feel like she was still a part of the community.

For other participants, the study presented an opportunity to dispute the media's narrative about VHS. As Carl said, "My version of the truth is different from [the media's]." For this reason, Carl felt that his participation in this study served as an opportunity to contribute to challenging the media's story and to building a different story about the VHS community. In addition, Carl really saw his participation in the study as linked to his blogging, in which he regularly provided stories about VHS, challenged local, state, and national policy decisions, and also deconstructed the interests being served by these policies. During a follow-up conversation with Carl in which I shared findings from the study, he began to, as he said, "connect the dots" and explained how the laws and policies at VHS connect to other decisions being made around the city, state, and nation.

Other participants expressed eagerness and joy at being able to recollect VHS's history through their stories. Community elder participant Joyce and teacher participant

Silvia, both of whom participated in one of the focus group interviews indicated how much fun they had “walking down memory lane” and how important it was to capture the history of VHS.

For participants who had just experienced the school’s reconstitution, the project’s timeliness served to aid in capturing the community’s cultural memory before it disappeared. As teacher participant Jesse indicated, during his first years at VHS he attempted to instill in his students a sense of school pride through the repeated activity of singing the alma mater song. However, over time, Jesse expressed how difficult it was to connect students to the greater VHS history because many of the practices of the campus changed and many of the historical markers, such as murals, were removed. In the case of Jesse and other participants, we talked about the need to construct a comprehensive history of the VHS community in order to share it with current community members and future generations of students. In some capacity, participants saw this project as beginning this work.

For alumni participants, their participation in this study provided an opportunity to tell their stories, but also to see how research is conducted. For instance, Penny expressed how grateful she was to tell her story, but also how now when her professors talked about their “dissertations,” she knew what that meant. She thanked me for explaining the process I was going through to conduct this study and to obtain my dissertation.

Since I had previous connections to participants, all of them were supportive of this study, often checking in with me about its progress and cheering me on to its

completion. While I cannot say that this study transformed any of the participants, I can express that each of them appreciated the opportunity to share their stories about VHS with me and with other participants, a fact that was obvious at the extended length of each interview session, willingness to engage in follow-up conversations, and overall support of my continued work on this topic. Many of the participants expressed interest in reading this study upon completion, even when I warned them of its length. In addition, many of the participants promoted my publication of this study, hoping that people such as VHS administrators, the school district superintendent, and even Secretary of Education Arne Duncan could read it. This interest truly indicated participants felt proud of the study, invested in its success, and yearned for it to be made public.

In many ways, participants' unwavering belief in the importance of this project strengthened me and made me feel like a conduit for their voices. Truly, with the project nearing completion, the deafening sounds of their voices rang out, as the project assumed a life of its own and became their way of seeing and speaking the world.

Implications for Victory High School (VHS)

The implications of this study for Victory High School (VHS) centered around the way in which this study functioned as an opportunity to document stories about VHS and to preserve them, something that had never occurred. Additionally, this study challenged the master narrative about the school and explored the interests served by the continuation of this narrative.

As community elders indicated through their stories, VHS had a number of laudatory moments throughout the years, but these were ignored, and worse, replaced by

a master narrative of failure. One needed only walk through the first floor hallway of the main building and look up at the school's Wall of Fame to see pictures of successful graduates, many of whom went on to professional careers as politicians, lawyers, educators, engineers, and even athletes. While these Wall of Fame plaques functioned as markers of the rich past of VHS, they were decontextualized without the stories of the individuals whose pictures are prominently displayed. Worst of all, there was no communal process to share these stories, and now with the school's reconstitution, many of the people who knew these successful graduates' stories have left. Altogether, the situation functioned to elide a community's history and to cut current students and their stories off from a more multi-faceted history of the school, its graduates, and their triumphs and setbacks.

The additional loss of other communal markers of history, as indicated by participants, also impacted the legacy that current students now join. For instance, Rhea talked of the number of murals she helped students to create and how over the years, these murals were painted over, lost to the new generations of students who could benefit from seeing them regularly. Such a loss of visual markers of history insured that students lose out on a touchstone that can engender pride in oneself and one's belonging to a community. Truly, I saw this when I was teaching at VHS, for I would often bring my students pictures from old VHS yearbooks or take them on tours of the Wall of Fame. Students always seemed surprised to imagine a history at VHS full of successful students. Yet, students expressed tremendous interest in hearing about other students and about

recollecting the school's past in an effort to understand their place in its present and future.

For this reason, this project had importance for the school and its current and future students and staff. It began to capture the stories that had been lived at the school, an effort that heretofore had not been engaged. Not only did this study capture these stories in order to preserve them, but it also provided social and historical context for them, so that others who heard or read them could know that these stories emerged from a particular moment in history, for better or for worse. By capturing these stories, a different image of the campus emerged, full of blemishes and celebrations. It was a story in which all individuals who connect to the school can see some aspect of their experience reflected and in doing this come to understand and appreciate their experience shared in community with many other people.

Implications for VHS Community

For the community surrounding VHS, this study began to capture the historical forces that affected it over the years. What emerged was a story of a community that became a touchstone when discussing poverty and race, but a story that elided the capitalism and globalization that causes poverty and the racism that perpetuates injustice. It was a community that experienced two different articulations of riots, but never reaped the attention needed to explore the roots of this violent anger and to take steps to mitigate its presence. It was a community that witnessed several historical cycles of anti-immigrant sentiments, living the paradox that is capitalism's need for a source of cheap labor but the United States' unwillingness to be grateful to those who offer their lives for

this country's economic greatness. On the backs of the people of color in this community, the city of Los Angeles, the state of California, and the nation of the United States have been built into world economic powers. Yet, for their efforts, all this community has earned is punishment, vilification, and oppression.

This study intervened in this narrative of scapegoating community members. It offered an opportunity to see a slice of the community as it was lived by its inhabitants. While there were complicated forces at play in the community including the presence of racialized competition for capital and participation in underground economies, such as drug trafficking, the community was not, as the media would have its audience believe, all bad. Without beginning to document the lived experiences of community members, solutions to some of the more difficult community problems, such as the violence that enmeshed participant Penny, or the homelessness that affected Troy's mother, could never be explored. Instead, under the current media master narrative, the community remained irrecoverable, a place to be thrown-away in the collective consciousness of more affluent city residents, the state, and even the nation. This study screamed that this community is not to be tossed aside or to be forgotten, but instead to be understood through the stories of its inhabitants in an effort to unravel the complex fabric of race and class in working class communities of color.

In addition, this study offered stories of hope, resilience, and resistance by community members who lived them. Penny's story of survival after a gunshot wound, her subsequent diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, and her desire to become active in a community organization that explored violence in the community illustrated

the tremendous resilience of community members and the deep reserves of power they have. Just beginning her college career, Penny expressed an interest in pursuing a law degree and using that degree to work for justice for her community. There is no doubt in my mind that this will be her life's work and the community will be the better for it.

In another example, Jesse's and Beatriz's involvement with opening a new high school in the community, that will be on a traditional track and community-based indicated the tremendous commitment many community members have to return and to enact social justice. Upon the publication of this study, the school district determined that Jesse, Beatriz, and their group of VHS colleagues would open the new high school in fall of 2011. Despite the fact that this group of VHS teachers experienced the school district and Obama administration's policy of reconstitution, they did not lose the desire to work in this community. Instead, the reconstitution strengthened their resolve to provide high quality, stable educational opportunities for students and families in South Central.

Implications for the Field of Education

This study offers the potential to assist in changing certain aspects of the field of education (Yosso, 2006). To begin, the study's combination of a "tripartite" theoretical framework (Brown, 2004) provided insight into the need to combine theoretical frameworks in an effort to account for the presence of race and class within working class communities of color. Using two theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory and social capital, this study has been able to construct a set of lenses through which to view both race and class in the VHS community. Studies conducted in working class communities

of color should consider the need for using a similar set of lenses in order to fully see the forces at play in a community similar to this one.

Additionally, this study's use of master narrative theory has implications for the field of education. As the study pointed out, often master narratives can be deployed within the field of education in textbooks (Aldridge, 2006), classroom instruction (Swartz, 1992), and even academic research (Stanley, 2007). Researchers in education need to be aware of ways in which their research reinscribes master narratives, particularly about working class communities of color, and strive to mitigate these occurrences. Critical discourse analysis can serve as a weapon against the redeployment of master narratives and researchers should continue to cultivate its development as a methodology in the field.

Finally, this study pointed to the harm enacted upon working class communities of color by the master narrative of quantitative data being deployed and strengthened under the NCLB Act (2001). The topos, or logic, of numbers became a common strategy of media accounts about VHS, but as educational researchers have recognized, these numbers are complicated and context-dependent. Yet, the data on VHS became a way to justify numerous educational reforms, including the school's reconstitution, without careful consideration of other factors such as the presence of social capital and the impact of reconstitution on it.

The extent to which the field of education is supporting neoliberal reform measures and protecting the interests served by these measures needs to be examined, as does the inherent value being gained by the field of education through the deployment of

these measures. For instance, one text entitled “From a Dropout Factory to UC Berkeley” (Banks, 2006) named research by academic Robert Balfanz for coining the term “dropout factory” and assigning this term to a number of schools, such as VHS. The media seized upon this term and utilized it frequently to refer to VHS. Academic research has the potential to impact the discourse in mainstream media about schools, particularly in working class communities of color. Researchers should be aware of this potential and act accordingly.

Implications for Media

If this study has pointed to the convergence of private corporate interests and the field of education, it most certainly can do the same for media. Today media conglomerates are concentrated into the hands of a few private corporate owners (Wilson et al., 2003). The desire of these owners to earn profits has been unquestioned, yet the methods they utilize to do so are suspect. The nexus of media with local, state, and federal policies and laws, which also arise from private corporate interests, must be examined and exposed.

As this study has shown, the media’s vilification of the VHS community had serious consequences for the members of this community. As participants indicated, the media’s coverage affected community members, demoralizing and oppressing them especially because they did not have the capability of talking back to the media or of narrating their story by themselves. The fact that the media’s master narrative aligned with the same interests as local, state, and national policies and laws, protecting both the economic and social hegemony in the United States constituted a seemingly

insurmountable opponent, where no hope seemed to appear for working class communities of colors to ever have the chance to narrate their stories freely.

Yet, the hope may lie in the emergence of new media technologies. As evidenced by Carl's blogging, new media technologies have presented new tools in the fight against the media's vilification of working class communities of color. While the impact of these tools should be explored, the tools should be more widely used by the members of communities like VHS so that a sustained, concerted exposure of interests protected by media portrayals of these communities occurs. Once the interests are exposed, participants can utilize these new tools to counter narrate these interests and situate their version of the truth they have experienced. Combined with other forms of resistance, such as letters to the editor, editorials, comments about stories, and even boycotts, perhaps the giant media conglomerates will change their practices and cease to vilify the most marginalized in our society.

Recommendations

The findings of this study offer a number of future avenues of study. Among these, recommendations are related to the specific "tripartite" theoretical framework of this study (Brown, 2004), which includes master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984), Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Additionally, the study pointed to the need for future research to analyze how neoliberal educational reforms negatively impact working class communities of color, so that these reforms can be exposed, countered, and hopefully stopped (Ravitch, 2010).

Master Narrative Theory

By integrating master narrative theory (Lyotard, 1984) into a discourse about media, education, and a working class community of color, this study contributed to seeing the relevance of master narratives in contemporary academic discourse. Perhaps more than ever in today's contemporary society where the construction of discourse is instantaneous and ubiquitous, researchers need to explore how smaller narratives are connecting to old master narratives or creating new ones. With these new technologies, master narratives have the potential to increase in exposure and power.

Conversely, new tools of technology provide avenues for combating master narratives, as evidenced in the example of Carl, who wrote a daily blog about local, state, and national educational news. Carl's blog served as a tool in the fight against reconstitution at VHS, and continues as a tool against neoliberal educational reforms, including privatization of schools. Perhaps future research can explore the impact of new tools of technology, such as blogs and social media websites, in challenging the current discourse about education in the United States.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

In this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has served as a lens through which to view the confluence of the media's master narrative, participants' counter stories, and laws and policies that have impacted the VHS community. Having been developed from legal discourse, CRT provided a strong theoretical framework for understanding the way that legal, political, and social institutions, such as media and schools, were inherently racist and continued to discriminate against people and communities of color.

While CRT functioned successfully in this study to expose racism in institutional structures, it was incomplete when discussing the racialization of economic opportunities that occurred in the mainstream media's discourse about the VHS community. On the subjects of capitalism, globalization and race, CRT seemed incomplete. In and of itself, CRT functions well to expose racism and should, perhaps, not be over extended, but rather combined regularly with another theoretical framework more geared towards exploring class and classism. In this study, CRT was combined with social capital, and perhaps future research could continue to explore the possibility of this theoretical pairing for analyzing both race and class in working class communities of color.

Linking CRT with another theoretical lens more geared toward exposing capitalism could also aid in understanding interactions between different racialized groups in the United States. Criticized for focusing too much on the African Americans and their relationship to White privilege and power, CRT scholarship has struggled with understanding relationships across racialized groups. In the example of this study, African Americans and Latinos in South Central experienced economic competition over finite financial resources. Both CRT and social capital were incomplete when analyzing this racialized competition. Future research should continue to analyze how best to explore interactions between racialized groups, especially when complicated by capitalism.

The presence of microaggressions in the United States may serve as an opportunity to begin an exploration across different racialized group. Microaggressions are defined as "stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes

of White superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority” (Davis, 1989, p. 145). In the case of Silvia’s story about her students’ racist slur about her being African American, the student clearly internalized White racist paradigms about African Americans, something that also appeared in the first media case study in 1990. The way in which people of color internalize discourse and paradigms of White racist paradigms may serve as a possible avenue for future exploration.

Indeed, this corresponds to the way in which the nation’s legal system works. As Davis (1989) illustrated, the law enacts these aggressions because “cognitive habit, history and culture” renders it “unable to hear the range of relevant voices and grapple with what reasonably might be said in the voice of discrimination’s victims” (p. 149). The media, legal system, and political system in play over the years 1990 to 2010 did not listen to the voices of the VHS community and acted without regard to these voices. Understanding how that legal system internalizes racist paradigms of the dominant group could provide a possible way for understanding how to make them listen in the future.

Social Capital Theory

Akom (2006) called for a new model of all aspects of social capital that includes a deep understanding of race, identity, history, and power. In the case of this study, participants spoke frequently of the presence of social capital. Yet, in participants’ views the reserves of social capital were demolished by the reconstitution of the school site in 2010.

In fact, some research suggested participants’ views on social capital after reconstitution were correct. Malen, Croninger, Muncey, and Redmond-Jones (2002)

stated that reconstitution operated under the belief that a school, once relieved of its staff, will be a “clean slate” for which to make a “fresh start.” In the case of Edison Memorial High School, Galleta and Ayala (2008) illustrated how stakeholders, such as parents and community members, sought to erase the notoriety of the school’s failure through the reconstitution process. Yet, as illustrated in this particular case study, reconstitution efforts did not guarantee such an erasure of a school’s history of failure nor did these efforts dispel stakeholders’ doubt in the school district and its ability to create higher performing student outcomes (Galleta & Ayala, 2008). In fact, reconstitution prevented new staff members from learning about the community and its history (Galleta & Ayala, 2008), knowledge that can be very important when educators attempt to facilitate connections between the classroom, community, and home (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The schools that opened after reconstitution “existed at the juncture between the tainted past of the former high school and promising future of the newly opened complex,” a precarious position “somewhere between marginalization and legitimacy” (Galleta & Ayala, 2008, p. 1980).

Staff turnover has plagued reconstituted schools (Malen et al., 2002). As Malen et al., (2002) pointed out, reconstitution “[o]perated on the belief that large pools of talented and dedicated people are awaiting the opportunity to work in troubled schools” (p. 127). Yet, this assumption did not ring true as reconstituted schools experience difficulty in fully staffing all teaching positions and in retaining teachers from year to year (Malen et al., 2002).

Within the literature on school reconstitution, only one article directly addressed its effect on social capital at a school site. Rice and Croninger (2005) relied predominantly on Coleman's definition of social capital, operationally defining the term as the way in which staff form "community, particularly one that promotes collaboration in achieving school goals" (p. 83). The two factors, school staff stability and networks of trust and collaboration, formed the basis of their analysis (Rice & Croninger, 2005).

As far as school stability, Rice and Croninger (2005) found that teacher turnover increased with reconstitution, as 22% of teachers left reconstituted school sites after the end of first year and 36% left after the end of the second year (p. 89). In addition, the reassignment of principals, which occurred at four schools during the first two years, contributed to instability of leadership at the school site. Ultimately, the high amount of teacher turnover undercut the development of networks of teachers focused on collaborating to improve student achievement (Rice & Croninger, 2005). Further, chaotic operations at the reconstituted school sites hindered the establishment of a shared vision and the development of protocols for teacher collaboration (Rice & Croninger, 2005). In sum, Rice and Croninger (2005) found "no evidence that social capital was enhanced by reconstitution" (p. 90).

This finding was not surprising given that the underlying philosophy of school reconstitution is the need to "dismantle" (p. 96) the previously existing social capital networks at a school site (Rice & Croninger, 2005). In fact, Rice and Croninger (2005) posited school reconstitution could contribute to the formation of dysfunctional social networks that hinder the development of positive forms of social capital. For example,

teacher isolation increased in some of the schools studied, a negative outgrowth of the chaotic operations and lack of time that occurred during school reconstitutions (Rice & Croninger, 2005).

Indeed, some participants echoed the findings of this research. Hugo spoke about the high number of new teachers at the school, many of whom seemed unfamiliar with VHS, its students, and its community. Gabriel expressed that a number of teaching positions went unfilled throughout the year and that regularly teachers quit their positions, refusing to return to work at the site. By his count, Gabriel cited at least 10 teachers and staff members who quit or transferred during the fall of the 2010 school year, a phenomenon that had not occurred at VHS in the years prior to the reconstitution. Indeed, the frequent teacher turnover and pain of losing other colleagues due to reconstitution caused Gabriel to stop seeking collaboration with other teachers. “Sometimes”, he said, “I won’t even learn a new person’s name.” Such a statement suggested a profound change in levels of trust and stability at VHS after the reconstitution.

Given LAUSD plans to reconstitute four additional schools next year, and other school districts across the nation are also engaging this reform measure, it seems imperative that researchers begin to evaluate this reform measure for its impact on social capital in the school and community and to assess the other intentional and unintentional consequences of the use of reconstitution.

Conclusion

In spring 2010, shortly after the announcement of VHS's reconstitution by the LAUSD Superintendent, I made the decision to not reapply to teach at the school. In doing so, I joined about 30 colleagues who also made the same decision in an effort to protest against the school district's decision and to repeal the decision. Unfortunately, no repeal came, and in June of 2010 I taught my last day at VHS.

My decision to leave impacted this research study by preventing me from having daily, regular access to the campus, students, and teachers during the later part of the project. While this decision reduced my ability to be a participant observer, it did provide an opportunity to gain and apply a different perspective on the school and community, allowing me to have a variety of angles from which to view the circumstances surrounding the school and community over the past 20 years.

Had I not taught at VHS, I never would have been able to gain such depth and breadth of insights from participants. My experience at VHS prompted participants to be more open about difficult topics, such as race and class. With this openness, I found myself shouldering a large responsibility—to narrate the stories of these individuals, VHS, and the surrounding community—one that I could not shirk.

The responsibility has not been easy, for the reconstitution of VHS and my subsequent departure left a hole in my heart, which has not healed. Admittedly, for some time after my last day at VHS, I let this project lay idle, not certain I would have the courage or fortitude to fulfill its demands. I worried that I could not do the participants and their stories justice. I feared that in continuing the project, I would be emotionally

wrecked, torn asunder by the waves of sorrow, loss and regret that ravaged me regularly because I felt I had turned my back on this community.

As more time passed and I gave it more consideration, I came to a realization. I determined that the participants in this study had never been afraid. Melissa was never afraid to fight against reforms that she believed injured students. Penny was not afraid to fight for teachers' jobs, students' rights, and even, her own human right to live in a safe, violence-free community. Carl was never afraid that his blogging could result in being fired. As I contemplated each of the stories of my participants, I realized that since they had never been afraid of standing up for the VHS community, I should not be either.

Decisively I continued the research and writing of this project, producing this document, which has in many ways been the balm to my torn heart, salving the sorrow of loss I felt upon departing from the beloved school and community that taught me so much.

While no document can ever heal the hurt inflicted on the students, teachers, community members, and elders of VHS, this document forged a path toward recuperation that will need to continue to be followed. For the community of VHS, past and present, might we find and follow the path that counters the horrors of institutional racism and capitalism with the lived truth of our experiences, carving out a way for other working class communities of color to emulate so that jointly we all strive toward the attainment of a more socially justice world. Together we are fearless.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Teacher/ Alumni/ Community Elder Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation: May 30, 2010

Loyola Marymount University

Study Title: Counter Narrating the Media's Master Narrative: A Case Study of Victory High School¹

- 1) I hereby authorize Beth Trincherro, M.A, Ed.D. candidate to include me in the following research study: Counter Narrating the Media's Master Narrative: A Case Study of Victory High School.
- 2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to counter narrate the media's negative portrayal of the Victory High School community and its members by interviewing members of the community about their experiences and which will last for approximately three months from July 2010 to September 2010.
- 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is because I am either a Victory High School teacher, alumni, or community elder who has experiences in the community during the years 1990-2010.
- 4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will be interviewed about my experiences working, attending school, and/or living in the Victory High School community. I understand that if I am a subject I will participate in an individual interview of approximately 1-hour in length. I will also participate in a follow-up interview of about 1-hour in length. Also, I will be invited

¹ Victory High School is a pseudonym.

to participate in an optional focus group interview of approximately 1-hour in length. In total, the amount of time that may be required to participate in this study could range from approximately two to three hours.

I understand that pseudonyms, or fake names, will be used throughout the research process to protect my privacy. I also understand that audio recordings, transcripts, and other identifying documents will be kept confidential and stored in a locked filed cabinet at the researcher's home.

The researcher will write a case study based on interviews with teachers, alumni and community elders of the Victory High School community. This case study will be included in a dissertation in partial requirements for graduation in the LMU School of Education Ed.D. program. These procedures have been explained to me by Beth Trincherro, M.A., Ed.D. candidate, and primary researcher.

- 5) I understand that I will be audiotaped. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.
- 6) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: There may be interview questions that I am uncomfortable answering or to which I would prefer not to respond. My participation in this study is voluntary, and I am under no obligation to answer any questions that I do not want to answer. In addition, a list of free and

low-cost counseling services is attached to this form in the event that any portion of my participation in this study results in the need to visit a counselor or mental health professional.

- 7) I also understand that I will receive no direct benefit by participating in this research study; however the possible benefits to humanity include contributing to the creation of a positive view of the Victory High School community and its members.
- 8) I understand that Beth Trinchero, M.A., Ed.D. candidate who can be reached at (818) 426-0993 will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 9) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 10) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU.)
- 11) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 12) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 13) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
- 14) I understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.
- 15) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact John Carfora, Ed.D. Chair, Institutional Review

Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 338-4599, John.Carfora@lmu.edu.

16a) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights."

16b) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form.

17) Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Date _____ Witness _____

APPENDIX B

Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code §24712, I understand that I have the following rights as a participant in a research study:

I will be informed of the nature and purpose of the experiment.

I will be given an explanation of the procedures to be followed in the medical experiment, and any drug or device to be utilized.

I will be given a description of any attendant discomforts and risks to be reasonably expected from the study.

I will be given an explanation of any benefits to be expected from the study, if applicable.

I will be given a disclosure of any appropriate alternative procedures, drugs or devices that might be advantageous and their relative risks and benefits.

I will be informed of the avenues of medical treatment, if any, available after the study is completed if complications should arise.

I will be given an opportunity to ask any questions concerning the study or the procedures involved.

I will be instructed that consent to participate in the research study may be withdrawn at any time and that I may discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

I will be given a copy of the signed and dated written consent form.

I will be given the opportunity to decide to consent or not to consent to the study without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence on my decision.

APPENDIX C

Individual Interview Questions–Teachers

1. Life History
 - a. Could you tell me about your family history, particularly as you were growing up?
 - b. Could you tell me where you went to school, starting with elementary and up until the present?
2. Victory High School History
 - a. What is your relationship to Victory High School?
 - b. Tell me about your experiences at Victory High School.
 - c. How would you describe the community you were a part of during your time at Victory High School?
 - d. Who were the people that most influenced your experiences at Victory High School?
 - e. What were the organizations or groups that most influenced your experiences at Victory High School?
 - f. Did you feel there were any successes that you experienced?
 - g. Did you feel there were any obstacles or barriers that you experienced?
What were these barriers and how did you deal with them?
3. Media Coverage of Victory High School
 - a. How do you think the media portrays Victory High School?
 - b. How do you feel about the media's portrayal of Victory High School?

- c. In doing an analysis of media coverage about Victory High School, I found the following:
_____. How do you feel about that portrayal of Victory High School?
- d. Also, in doing an analysis of media coverage about Victory High School, I also found the following:
_____. To what extent do you feel that that portrayal is accurate?
- e. How do you think the media coverage affects the students, teachers, or community members of Victory High School?

4. Nomination Process

- a. Can you nominate any Victory High School alumni to participate in this study?
- b. Can you nominate any community elders who have worked at Victory High School or lived in the area surrounding Victory High School for the last 20 years?

Individual Interview Questions–Alumni

1. Life History
 - a. Could you tell me about your family history, particularly as you were growing up?
 - b. Could you tell me where you went to school, starting with elementary and up until the present?
2. Victory High School History
 - a. What is your relationship to Victory High School?
 - b. Tell me about your experiences at Victory High School.
 - c. How would you describe the community you were a part of during your time at Victory High School?
 - d. Who were the people that most influenced your experiences at Victory High School?
 - e. What were the organizations or groups that most influenced your experiences at Victory High School?
 - f. Did you feel there were any successes that you experienced?
 - g. Did you feel there were any obstacles or barriers that you experienced?
What were these barriers and how did you deal with them?
3. Media Coverage of Victory High School
 - a. How do you think the media portrays Victory High School?
 - b. How do you feel about the media's portrayal of Victory High School?

- c. In doing an analysis of media coverage about Victory High School, I found the following:
_____. How do you feel about that portrayal of Victory High School?
- d. Also, in doing an analysis of media coverage about Victory High School, I also found the following:
_____. To what extent do you feel that that portrayal is accurate?
- e. How do you think the media coverage affects the students, teachers, or community members of Victory High School?

4. Nomination Process

- a. Can you nominate any community elders who have worked at Victory High School or lived in the area surrounding Victory High School for the last 20 years?

Individual Interview Questions–Community Elders

1. Life History

- a. Could you tell me about your family history, particularly as you were growing up?
- b. Could you tell me where you went to school, starting with elementary and up until the present?
- c. Could you tell me about your experiences living in this neighborhood?

2. Victory High School History

- a. What is your relationship to Victory High School?
- b. Tell me about your experiences at Victory High School.
- c. How would you describe the community you were a part of during your time at Victory High School?
- d. Who were the people that most influenced your experiences at Victory High School or in the surrounding community?
- e. What were the organizations or groups that most influenced your experiences at Victory High School or in the surrounding community?
- f. Did you feel there were any successes that you experienced?
- g. Did you feel there were any obstacles or barriers that you experienced?
What were these barriers and how did you deal with them?

3. Media Coverage of Victory High School

- a. How do you think the media portrays Victory High School?

- b. How do you think the media portrays the community surrounding Victory High School?
- c. How do you feel about the media's portrayal of Victory High School?
- d. In doing an analysis of media coverage about Victory High School and the surrounding community, I found the following:_____.
How do you feel about that portrayal?
- e. Also, in doing an analysis of media coverage about Victory High School and the surrounding community, I found the following:_____.
To what extent do you feel that that portrayal is accurate?
- f. How do you think the media coverage affects the students, teachers, or community members of Victory High School?

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Have you been involved with Victory High School? If so, in what capacity?
2. Can you describe your experiences in the school or community surrounding Victory High School?
3. What is your favorite story about your experience at Victory High School?
4. What is your least favorite story about your experience at Victory High School?
5. What social networks (e.g. groups, clubs, etc.) do you belong to at Victory High School or in the surrounding community and how have these networks affected you?
6. Who are the people who most affect you during your experiences at Victory High School or in the surrounding community?
7. What is the reputation of Victory High School and the surrounding community?
8. How do you think the media portrays Victory High School and the surrounding community?
9. In my research, I found that the media portrayed Victory High School as _____ [take from critical discourse analysis]. To what extent do you think that portrayal is accurate? What do you think about that portrayal?
10. In my research, I also found that the media portrayed Victory High School as _____ [take from

critical discourse analysis]. To what extent do you think that portrayal is accurate?

What do you think about that portrayal?

APPENDIX E

Follow-Up Individual Interview Questions

1. Among the findings from this research study are... What do you think of that finding? Does it correspond to any experiences you have had?
2. Among the findings from this research study are... What do you think of that finding? Does it correspond to any experiences you have had?
3. Among the findings from this research study are... What do you think of that finding? Does it correspond to any experiences you have had?
4. Can you describe your experience participating in this research study?
5. What effect did your participation in this research study have on you?
6. What additional information would you like to share?

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