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Loyola Marymount University

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Summer July 2011

Taken Over: The Story of the Locke High School Takeover Through a Qualitative Study of Student Voice

Joshua Michael Beardall
Loyola Marymount University, joshua.beardall@gmail.com

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Taken Over:

The Story of the Locke High School Takeover

Through a Qualitative Study of Student Voice

by

Joshua Michael Beardall

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

Taken Over:

The Story of the Locke High School Takeover

Through a Qualitative Study of Student Voice

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045
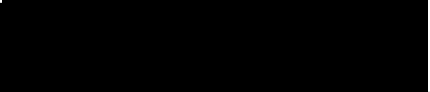
This dissertation written by Joshua M. Beardall, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

_____ _July 29, 2011_ _____
Date

Dissertation Committee

Mary K. McCullough, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Marta Baltodano, Ph.D., Committee Member

Jill Bickett, Ed.D., Committee Member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To all of the students who have or will attend Locke

and the people involved in their lives.

Once a Saint, always a Saint.

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ABSTRACT

Taken Over: The Story of the Locke High School

Takeover Through a Qualitative Study of Student Voice

By

Joshua Michael Beardall

In Los Angeles, the charter movement has gained incredible momentum as Charter

Management Organizations take over troubled public schools in working class

neighborhoods and communities of color. In Watts, a Latino and African American

working class neighborhood, Locke High School had long stood as a troubled school in

the Los Angeles Unified School District. After decades of low test scores, violence, and

astronomical dropout rates, Green Dot Public Schools took over the campus and, in 2008,

opened Locke as a public charter school under its management. This study examined the

perceptions, experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students at Locke whose high

school was taken over. These students described the impact this charter takeover had on

their social, academic, and personal lives. Using qualitative research methodology, this

study utilized student-created photo essays, in-depth semistructured interviews, and a

focus group. Though the media prematurely labeled the takeover a success, the students'

views differed. They described how the takeover helped them academically, but failed to

give them a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. The takeover also failed to meet

their social needs. These students discussed how the takeover improved the Locke

campus, but failed to make ongoing improvements throughout the school. Students

offered their stories and counterstories to the mainstream media, which applauded the

changed atmosphere. They reminisced about the past, mourned social loss, complained

of uniforms and strict compliance to rules, and hoped for additional changes. These

students added personal voices to the takeover of their high school.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Introduction

Alain Leroy Locke Senior High School, known throughout the city of Los Angeles as Locke, is located in the Watts area of South Los Angeles. The school is located near an intersection of freeways, Interstate 110, the Harbor Freeway, and Interstate 105. These freeways, and their major concrete interchange, dominate traffic through the Watts community, and their grey décor are clearly visible from the western-facing school windows. The 105 is an interstate that runs east and west, bisecting north Los Angeles County from its southern half. For the majority of the central length through the county, the 105 freeway travels primarily through low-income and high crime areas whereas the 110 freeway serves as the main corridor between the Port of Los Angeles and the downtown civic center. These freeways divide the greater county into smaller sections of individual cities as well as provide a route for transportation. Additionally, the 110 and 105 freeways unwittingly form a concrete divide between rival gangs and their territories.

The story of Alain Leroy Locke High School begins with the violent history of Watts. The school was created as a result of the violent 1965 Watts riots and is to this day affected by the continual urban problems that shape the neighborhood. Locke High School was recently taken over by Green Dot Public Schools and converted into a public charter school. For the first 40 years of its existence, the school was run by Los Angeles Unified School District. In September of 2008, the school started its first year as a public charter school. This qualitative research study has examined the perceptions,

experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students of color who went through the takeover and conversion of Locke High School. This study has also examined how students describe the impact on their social, academic, and personal lives as a result of the takeover. Using qualitative methods, the study includes photo essays, interviews, and a focus group, which were used to acquire the data. To better understand the history and urban problems that created and affect Locke, a brief history of the neighborhood is necessary.

Historical Background

Watts was built on the Rancho La Tajuata plot of land, 10 miles south of Los Angeles. The original city is named after the railroad station that helped spur growth in the area, but now the name carries with it the harsh memories of the 1965 Watts Riots, economic depression, and urban blight characteristic of the neighborhood. A nearby railroad station was named after the family that originally donated land to the Pacific Electric Railway. The city of Watts was incorporated as a city in 1907 and then annexed to the city of Los Angeles in 1927 (Abu-Lughod, 2007).

In the earlier part of the 20th century, Watts had a diverse community composed of Caucasians, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and African Americans. The second great migration, 1941-1970, brought tens of thousands of migrants from the South to the Watts area to fill the new and pressing need for industry during World War II. In order to house workers for the booming war industry, Los Angeles began building large housing projects in the area. Due to radical housing policies in Los Angeles, Blacks were forced to live in the South Los Angeles region (McCone & Christopher, 1965). As the area

became predominantly Black—87% of the population (Abu-Lughold, 2007, p. 200)—Whites moved out of the area. In the years following the war, the need for industry slowed down and industrial jobs began moving out of the area. Without sufficient work and salaries, more Blacks in the Watts area began to fill the projects. Discriminatory treatment, racist housing policies, and insufficient public services would come to a boiling point in August of 1965. Angry and frustrated at being treated as second-class citizens, the community exploded in what would be known as the infamous 1965 Watts Riots. These five days in August would leave 34 people dead, more than 1,000 people injured, and more than $40 million in damages (Stevens, 2009). This event was the catalyst for creating Alain Leroy Locke High School.

Flashing forward, the 1970s and 1980s would prove economically difficult and extremely violent decades for the community as a result of increases in unemployment, the growth of gang warfare, and the proliferation of drugs. During these two decades, more and more industrial jobs moved out of the area, leaving families without work and benefits. The area grew more impoverished and crime was on the rise. During these decades, some of the most well-known and violent street gangs would see their birth and growth in Watts. Gangs would fight over prime city block territories and the drug trade itself would make Watts one of the most violent neighborhoods in the nation. The introduction of crack-cocaine in the 1980s only increased the violence of the drug trade (Coffey, 1992).

Unfortunately, the violence of these two decades would not calm in the following decade either. In 1992, another riot rocked the Watts area. The 1992 Los Angeles Riots

caused widespread destruction and once again became an outlet for racial frustration. These losses would total over a billion dollars (Ong, 1993). After the riots, families that could leave the area, left for other neighborhoods in South Los Angeles and other suburban communities. As these families left, many of the vacancies were filled with successor migrants, primarily of Latin American ancestry. These migrations out of the community have continued and in 2011, residents of Latino ancestry constituted the majority racial demographic in the neighborhood. The Watts area consisted of 61.6% Latin ancestory, 37.1% Black, and 1.2% other (*The Los Angeles Times*, 2011b).

Locke was built out of this history and has shared in the recent history of Watts. Situated on two city blocks and rising three stories high, the school was created as a beacon of hope for an underserved community. Long underserved, the school was recently taken over by a charter organization and is attempting to once again become that beacon of hope in the Watts community.

Statement of the Problem

Locke High School endured for four difficult decades as the surrounding community struggled with drugs, gangs, and a lack of resources. The community affected the school and the students attending the school. Emerging from this community, many of the students arrived with low verbal and reading skills, behavior difficulties, and home life difficulties, similar to many students of challenging backgrounds who lack the tools to navigate the educational system (Knesting & Waldron, 2006) and the opportunity to make the needed changes in curriculum, school structure, and school culture. While newspaper columnists, authors, and Charter Management

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Organizations continue to sort out whether the Locke Senior High School charter takeover is successful or not, the largest stakeholders—the students, who also have the most to lose—have not been given the opportunity to participate in the constructive dialogue about what stakeholders expect from a quality public charter education. Students are critical in understanding equitable educational reform in America today. Students' voices must be heard; doing so may result in constructive ownership of their classroom education and an ability to determine their own trajectory in a socially unjust system. During the takeover of a large urban public high school, the perspectives of students must be given a place in the decision-making process that will dictate and guide the policies by which their school will be run. Stakeholders need to remember that the school itself is built to serve the needs and interests of the students who attend; thus their voices must be solicited, heard, and involved while creating and enacting school policies and procedures.

Schools in need of change are being transformed, reconstituted, and taken over with very little or no input and participation from the students affected concerning basic problems, solutions, and how they believe the school could meet their needs. Although much academic literature discusses the student's voice, little of it concerns school takeovers or school reform, though Mitra (2008) has begun looking at student voice as an agent of change. This research study adds to the literature in this area through an examination of the perceptions and attitudes of a group of five 12th-grade students whose school, Locke High School, was taken over by the Charter Management Organization, Green Dot Public Schools.

At this writing, Los Angeles is experiencing an unparalleled level of growth in charter schools; new schools are blossoming all over the city (Blume, 2011a). Some are being started in church basements and renovated recreational centers, while existing— and oftentimes failing—schools are being taken over to implement public charters negotiated with the parent district. Amidst this charter frenzy, however, reformers must take a step back and consider some important questions regarding school conversions and transformations. Importantly, reformers must be mindful of the plight of the students attending schools in flux. Researchers, parents, and education professionals must determine whether this charter movement positively affects the students involved. They need to ask students their opinions of the change. Charter Management Organizations need to incorporate students within the charter takeover process. Management organizations need to implement methodologies to address the needs of students.

When examining the changes taking place within schools, looking at the views and opinions of the students involved in this change is necessary. In the case of Alain Leroy Locke Senior High School, one must look at the stories and the counterstories available, which are often in conflict with what the mainstream media has said about Locke. These are the voices of the community; and oftentimes these are the most informed voices of the takeover's pitfalls and successes because these are the voices of the students experiencing the changes themselves.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather, examine, and analyze the opinions and perceptions of students involved in the transformation of a public school

into a charter school in the Watts community. Responding to the dearth of academic research considering the voices of high-needs, at-risk students, I hoped to create a platform by which the student voice and student perspective can be seen, heard, and incorporated into the discussion of the takeover of high-needs schools by outside organizations. This study also hoped to inform the future reform effort of high-needs schools, especially as Los Angeles Unified School District continues to hand schools over to outside organizations. This study examined how the students at one of these schools viewed and experienced the takeover of their school by a Charter Management Organization.

Significance of the Study

In Los Angeles, schools are currently being taken over by several different entities: Charter Management Organizations, a group led by the mayor of Los Angeles, teacher organizations, and community organizations (Blume, 2011a). Schools are being taken over and students have had little say in how, when, or why it is happening. Including student opinions is crucial to the dominant dialogue that is discussing and dissecting these schools. It is especially important to consider the voices of high-needs students, as many of the conversion schools originate as underperforming, inner-city, large minority population schools. In a city desperately seeking tangible educational reform, reformists are currently finding themselves using charter schools to create educational transformation. All schools, school districts, county offices of education, and state offices of education are responsible for ensuring that they service the students involved. While focusing on change, educators and reformers need to make sure that

they do not overlook the very students they are seeking to help. As schools become more proficient at gathering test scores and empirical data to determine the quality of education offered at charter schools, such research must simultaneously consider student voices in order to create a clear picture of the effectiveness and equity of the education offered by the school (Yonezawa & Jones, 2009).

Although it was an academic endeavor, this research study has benefited students and communities of color currently facing the possibility of public charter school transformation as well as those facing the tough aforementioned questions. The benefits extend beyond students and their families and also benefit these four additional areas: public school districts, Charter Management Organizations, academic communities within the charter school movement, and a platform for the sharing of student voice.

The first group that benefits from this research is public school districts, such as LAUSD, which are allowing Charter Management Organizations to take over their schools. This group would include the mayor of Los Angeles' education department, which has also taken over a series of schools. These school districts need to be informed about the consequences and effects that these takeovers have on the students who are directly affected. A second job of the district overseeing the takeover is to ensure the quality of the education the students receive. The district needs to ensure that the students and the schools they hand over to Charter Management Organizations are being given an equitable education; this study looks at the students' perceptions of the education they receive.

The second group that benefits from this study is the group of Charter Management Organizations, such as Green Dot Public Schools. As Charter Management Organizations in Los Angeles are interested in expanding, they will need to look at how their actions affect the students involved in their transformations in order to gauge true success and to measure their future goals of reform. This study will give them direct information and data, which can, in turn, help them use the opinions of the students to better guide the continuing transformation of Locke and future takeover projects that they may undertake.

The third group that benefits is the schools involved in the charter school movement and the academic community. With the transformation of large urban high schools as a current topic, this study adds student voices to that discussion. Adding student voices to the dialogue gives decision makers direct data and information on how this transformation has directly affected the students involved. Though test scores and empirical data were collected, this qualitative research gives a personal voice to the discussion. The research contributes a critical social justice lens to the discussion of public education reform. It also provides Locke Senior High School students a platform upon which to express their experiences of educational reform; the student photo essay project aims to illustrate the need to foster positive collaboration around expected outcomes for public school conversions in urban communities of color.

The fourth area is a platform for student voice, as this research study predominantly focused on student voice. Specifically, this research hopes to have given a platform to high-needs students through the sharing of their voice. This sharing of voice

will better enable students to vocalize their opinions, needs, and positions within a high school that will, in turn, allow them to better determine their own path in high school and beyond. In a broader sense, the information gathered from this study has the capacity to yield more effective student-centered methods to facilitate student learning in the classroom and to promote the importance of student voices during a heated era of rapidly growing public charter schools. The research involved has helped students to understand their part in the takeover and whether the school has met their needs. It has also allowed their voices to be heard by a larger audience through the publication of this study. They have discussed the positive results of the takeover and explained how it has negatively affected them as students. Ideally, then, the research conducted in this study will be used to better classrooms at other high-needs schools that are not involved within this specific study but that experience some of the same trials and tribulations as Locke High School.

Research Questions

This ethnographic study of five 12th-grade students of color at Locke High School has examined student perceptions, experiences, and stories according to how they experienced the takeover. In order to answer the research questions below, the research has utilized the creation of photo essays, in-depth, semistructured interviews, and a focus group. The following questions guided the research and helped to design the research methodology involved in this study:

1. What are the perceptions, experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students of color who experienced the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

2. How do five 12th-grade students of color describe the impact on their social, academic, and personal lives during and after the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

Theoretical Framework

In order to best answer the research questions, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was chosen as a theoretical framework to guide the research and analysis of the study. CRT seeks to transform accepted dominant ideologies regarding race and power. Specifically, the CRT model lends itself ideally to storytelling or—in the case of Locke High School—counterstorytelling, in which marginalized communities initiate the process of detailing their own stories and naming their own realities. The researcher employed CRT, a framework that lends itself well to creating a better understanding of educational reform and of the role of student voice in a school takeover. This framework was beneficial to this study on educational reform because education is often seen as an institution that perpetuates racial inequality (Spring, 2004). It is important to view these reforms from the students' point of view, as they have been affected by the inequities in education and are affected by the reforms. The absence of Locke student voices, which have not been solicited or included in the dialogue of educational reform either by the popular media or by Green Dot Public Schools, is a dismal reminder of the ways in which race relations in public education are not simply individual acts of accidental oppression or forgetfulness. Examining the voices of students of color has provided narratives and counternarratives to better examine the takeover of a high school serving students of color.

In this project, Critical Race Theory was used as a framework to critically examine the research questions. This effort is accomplished by examining the educational environment of students of color, the power relations of students of color with regard to the takeover of their high school, and the voice—or lack of voice—these students had in determining their own educational outcomes as a result of attending Locke High School.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines and attempts to define the decisive roles that race plays within society. CRT looks at race from a comprehensive perspective that grew out of the field of legal studies over the past four decades. Though it began in the field of law, CRT has moved into other disciplines including education, political science, ethnic studies, and American studies. According to Delgado and Stancic (2001), "many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT's ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing" (p. 3). This lens is particularly useful to this research because race is a key factor in educational inequity and social injustice. A CRT framework that incorporates the use of counterstorytelling from people of color (in contrast to dominant culture storytelling) has informed my research as I collected and published the counterstories of Locke students regarding the takeover of their high school. Furthermore, the use of CRT acknowledges this project as race-conscious scholarship that discusses the strong influence race plays within educational policymaking in our society.

In addition, CRT has an activist dimension. Delgado and Stancic wrote, "[CRT] not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better" (p. 3). Thus, this study attempted not only to examine the research questions but also to initiate change in charter schools in Los Angeles. A literature review of Critical Race Theory is included in Chapter Two.

Methodology

This research was a qualitative study that examined the perceptions, experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students of color at Locke High School. In this study, all students were from the Locke Launch to College Academy (LLCA). The LLCA was the small school within Locke High School that housed all of the former LAUSD students. The LLCA no longer exists, as all of the LAUSD students have graduated; those who have not graduated have moved on to other schools to finish their high school experience. The students in the LLCA were the only students at Locke to have been participants of Locke under both LAUSD and Green Dot.

After reviewing the relevant educational research and gaining an understanding of the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT), this researcher attempted to determine the perceptions of students involved in the takeover and transformation of Alain Leroy Locke Senior High School from a public high school within the Los Angeles Unified School District to a public charter institution under the direction and care of Green Dot Public Schools. Most importantly, this study has examined the perceptions of Locke High School students regarding the takeover by listening to their own personal voices, utilizing

one-on-one interviews and considering a student photographic essay (Appendix A). With each photographic essay submitted for the purpose of this dissertation, each student added to a narrative in order to create meaning and to best apply their own words and experiences to their photographs. The in-depth interviews and photo essays examined what it meant to them to be a part of the Locke High School takeover project (Appendix B-D). After the photo essays were received and the interviews conducted, the five participants took part in a focus group where they discussed together their experiences and stories. A methodological focus on ethnographic narratives, student voice, and visual anthropology was utilized in an effort to bring forth honest and sincere perspectives of their experiences as students during the takeover of Locke Senior High School (Appendix E).

Research Design

This research study includes five 12th-grade students from the Locke Launch to College Academy (LLCA), which was one of the small schools that helped to create Locke High School after the takeover. These students were all 12th-graders, as there were only 12th-graders at the school during the year. These five participants were also students of color. These five students were participants in the photography class at the LLCA and needed to have been at the school for all four years and to have experienced Locke under both LAUSD and Green Dot Public Schools. The research included three different stages of data collection; the students participated in all three stages.

The students involved were participants in the research and also created photo essays for the project. These photo essays helped to show their perceptions and to

explain their experiences as students during the takeover. Each photograph within the students' essays included three sentences explaining the picture and how it demonstrated their perception of the takeover of Locke High School. These photo essays were also used later during the student interviews and the focus group. The assignment and accompanying worksheets can be found in the appendix.

Once the students completed their photo essays, they each took part in three one-hour interviews. These interviews afforded them the time to explain their perceptions, experiences, and stories concerning the takeover. They also had the opportunity to explain their photo essays in depth. The five students also discussed how the takeover impacted their social, academic, and personal lives.

After all of the interviews were conducted and each student had had the opportunity to reflect on his or her experiences through the interview process, all of the students participated in a focus group. The students shared with each other their photo essays, explained their pictures, told their stories, listened to one another's experiences, and discussed their views of the school.

After all three research stages were completed, the research was coded, analyzed, and then organized and displayed in Chapter Four of this dissertation. Chapter Five includes an analysis of the data collected during the research stage.

Limitations

A limitation is a factor that is out of the hands of the researcher. A few areas involved decisions that need to be made in order to create limits to the study; they are time, participant mortality, participant base, location, and researcher as teacher.

The first limitation was time. The time set for the research data collection was two semester months of a traditional calendar school year. The data collection portion of the study itself occurred during the second semester of Locke High School's 2010-11 school year. Although a study of the full high school career of at-risk students and their outlooks and perceptions toward a charter takeover would yield far more results, I set limits on the study. I, as the researcher, did not have the time, funding, or resources to conduct a research study of that magnitude. Also, the only students who had experienced both LAUSD and Green Dot were 12th graders during the research and they graduated at the end of the school year.

The second limitation was participant mortality. One of the factors of an at-risk student is a high mobility rate. Many students leave school or drop out. At this location, students are not guaranteed to attend the class for the full year, as many classes change at the semester point and after. Therefore, a one-semester time limit was long enough to maintain a participant base and for the study to remain effective. The study was most beneficial during the second semester, because I had already had the opportunity to build relationships with the students during the previous semester. Because this study took place during the second semester, there was also the risk that students who were not on track to graduate would be moved to another school or drop out. The goal was to complete the research data collection with the original five students who participated in the photo essays and five in-depth interviews.

The third limitation was the limited participant base. Though the school now has roughly 300 students, the research was limited to only five 12th-grade Locke students as

participants in the research. Completely understanding that a larger and more

comprehensive participant base would have been beneficial to the design and purpose of

this study, this research concluded that such a task would dilute the amount of time and

attention that each student would have received. Because of the use of CRT as a critical

framework and its reliance on storytelling, spending enough time with each student was

vital to recording and accessing his/her stories. In this qualitative study, the quality of

research far outweighed the quantity of research gathered. Thus, with my committee, I

decided five students would be the best number of participants to use in this research

study; this number was the best balance between a larger quantity of students and the

quality of interviewing that could take place. In order to discuss the individual stories

and to create more reliable data, a focus group took place in which the five students

discussed their stories and perceptions of the Locke takeover. They each brought their

stories and ideas to create an overall group discussion of the takeover. The information

from the interviews helped give value and meaning to the photo essay and provided a

better understanding of the three data collection methods.

The fourth limitation was the use of only one high school for the study. The

research only dealt with the takeover of one high-needs school. As such, results cannot

be generalized to all takeovers. Also, Locke is a large urban high school with over 99%

of the population being Latina/o or African American. Therefore, results cannot be

generalized beyond urban high schools with similar demographics facing a similar

takeover. In conducting this project, this researcher hoped that its conclusions would be

applicable in more general terms, such as for understanding charter schools, takeovers, and the value of student voices.

The fifth limitation was the role that I had as both researcher *and* teacher. Playing both roles had some benefits and some disadvantages. Because I was using my own school, classes, and students, I was quite familiar with the area and had already built relationships with the students. I knew them personally and knew how I would be able to best approach them. I also had full access to the students and was able to work with them on their projects. A disadvantage of being both the researcher and the teacher of the student was the set of biases that I may have already had. These biases may have prevented me from being fully able to capture data in the manner of an unbiased researcher. Another disadvantage was a possible conflict of interest between me, as the teacher, and a student. The students may have been less likely to share with me thoughts and experiences that could get them into trouble or be a conflict of interest to them as students.

Definition of Dissertation Key Terms

Charter School. A charter school is a publically funded school that operates outside of the normal state and district regulations of public schools. These schools are granted a charter through a district or state entity. This charter gives schools more freedom, in turn holding them more accountable for increasing student academic achievement. These schools must accept all students who apply within the district boundaries; if there are too few seats, a lottery must be held (Broillette, 2002).

Student voice. Student voice is the collective and individual views, thoughts, and perceptions of students. Though a student always has a voice, a student may not always have the forum in which to be heard. Allowing students a forum to voice their thoughts and opinions is honoring the considered student voice. Studies have shown that when students have an opportunity and place for their voices to be heard, they have the capability of being positive partners in their own education (SooHoo, 1993).

Photoethnography. Photoethnography is a methodology used within the field of visual anthropology. Photographic ethnography is a method of collecting data using photographs as the main means of obtainment. As a partner with the photograph, texts and narratives help to give the photograph meaning. The text and the narrative can be ascertained through interviews, dialogue, photo elicitation interviews, or captions written alongside the picture in a photographic essay format (Strong & Wilder, 2009).

At-risk. Over the past century, many descriptors have been used to label students whose trajectory is pointed toward academic failure. Some of these labels are "disadvantaged," "urban," and "culturally deprived" (Spring, 2004).   The term currently used to label students at risk of academic failure is "at risk" (Anyon, 1997; Kershner & Connolly, 1991; Rubin, 2003; Spring, 2004). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definition of "at risk" will be used for this study. According to NCES (1997), factors that put a student at risk include one or more of the following:

- Being in the lowest socioeconomic status.
- Changing schools two or more times from grades 1 to 8 (except for transitions to middle school or junior high school).

- Having average grades of C or lower from grades 6 to 8.

- Being in a single-parent household during grade 8.

- Having one or more older siblings who left high school before completion.

- Being held back one or more times from grades 1 to 8.

Students become at risk because of the environments and the settings in which they are placed rather than because of decisions and actions that they make. In fact, many students are, by definition, at risk even though they have no academic problems (Spring, 2004). By these definitions, the majority of students at Locke High School are considered "at risk"; therefore, this term is utilized throughout this paper to describe the student population at Locke.

It is a social injustice that some of the most at-risk urban students are also the students who are continuously unsuccessful in school. Not only do many of these students come from difficult circumstances, but also many of them continuously fail despite their own efforts. Though many schools label these students "difficult" or "problem students," the real difficulties and problems lie with the circumstances they are forced to overcome on a daily basis in their own homes and community environments. While at-risk, high-needs students are denied many basic necessities in life, they are nonetheless expected to attain academic success. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, satisfying one's basic needs and necessities is a prerequisite to academic success (Woolfolk, 2004). Though denied these necessities, at-risk students are still expected to perform at the same levels as all other students—even those from privileged backgrounds. Therefore, educators and policymakers must listen to students and

determine what basic factors and deficiency needs are preventing them from achieving

within a system that has continuously kept them from attaining this success.

It is problematic to use the term *at-risk* as it is within the field of education. One

of the problems with defining students as at-risk is that the focus of negativity is placed

directly on the student. The term at-risk connotes hazardous and dangerous. The

definition of at-risk creates problems by unfairly defining students in a socially unjust

manner. Educators need to be careful about how they define and label students. As

Worthom (2004) has stated, "An individual's identity thickens in part with reference to

public models of identity" (p. 167). If we define students with this label, then we should

not be surprised when students act in a like manner. This label not only defines the

student, but also confines him or her to that specific role (Worthom, 2004). We can go

further in assuming that these labels affect teacher perceptions and expectations of

student achievement; students rise and fall to the expectations of the teacher (Oakes &

Lipton, 2007). Thus, it is hazardous for researchers and practitioners to label students

with such dangerous terminology. Franklin (2000) has written, "the label at risk may

place students more at risk than internal and external factors" (p. 3). With this

understanding, the study attempts to limit the use of at-risk, but uses it because of its

continual use within education.

Public school takeover. A public school takeover is a distinct process by which a

public high school begins a conversion procedure in order to become a charter school.

This takeover may be done through a charter school management entity or any outside

organization, such as a mayor or community. Although a basic conversion involves

parents or teachers, a takeover involves an outside entity that drives the change and then

assumes responsibility for the decisions and management of the school. Although the

school name, facilities, and students may remain the same, the management and running

of the school changes hands. According to this working definition, the conversion of

Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools was a takeover (Cibulka, 2005).

Urban v. high needs. Within this research, the term *urban* refers to a geographic

location of population density and does not at all attempt to misuse the term when

describing high needs schools. Duncan calls attention to "contemporary times, [in which]

concepts like 'inner-city' and 'urban' reiterate the 'savage,' 'primitive,' and 'barbaric' in

the present and their applications to certain schools and students are indicative of the

allochronism that informs US public education" (Duncan, 2002, p. 98). This definition is

not the case here, however, as the term "high needs" is utilized to best highlight the

circumstances of the academic lives of secondary students at Locke High School within a

CRT framework.

Background of the Researcher

In this study, I was both the researcher and the teacher of the student participants.

I had been at the school for seven years and experienced the school under LAUSD and

Green Dot. Being the teacher of these students, I realized that their voices were not being

heard and their needs were not being met. Seeing this situation, I created a research study

that would allow students to discuss the takeover of their high school and how it affected

them. Having their school taken over and having experienced the takeover, I felt that

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these students had become experts on high school takeovers. They knew and understood

what student needs were and what a school could do in order to meet their needs.

I chose to use Critical Race Theory to highlight the voices of the students and to

examine how these students viewed the takeover of their school. Though I am a

Caucasian male, I felt that CRT offered the appropriate theoretical lens to examine a

school takeover and the educational reforms it attempted to create. I have attempted to

use the students' voices to tell the stories of Locke High School and thus to limit my own

voice. With the study using a CRT lens, my Caucasian, male voice could not tell the

story or overpower the voices of the students of color. Though I limited my voice in

preference to the students' voices, at times I conveyed experiences that the students did

not mention. As a participant in the school and in the research, I had access to the

students, developed relationships of trust with them, and was able to verify the stories

they told.

Outline of the Content

The outline of this study follows a traditional five-chapter dissertation model. In

this chapter, I have informed the reader of the purpose of this study and the direction in

which it is headed. I have also given background knowledge, key terminology, and

information needed for the reader to navigate the study with understanding and the

opportunity for critical thinking. In the second chapter of this study, I have given the

reader an opportunity to delve into the literature surrounding this topic, including an

academic look at Critical Race Theory, student voice, charter schools, and visual

anthropology. The reader is able to look critically at the topic studied, as he/she is

involved in a discussion of the literature. In Chapter Three, I outline the methodology

used within this study. Along with the outline of the methodology, I included a rationale

for the methodology, specifically that of photoethnography, interviews, and focus groups.

The results of the research are the topic of Chapter Four, which gives the reader an

opportunity to examine the data before a discussion of the results is presented. I have

discussed the research findings in Chapter Five and then conclude the study. It is hoped

that this discussion will yield considerable benefit to the community as it includes the

implications of this study and adds recommendations for further study and continued

charter school reform.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature concerning topics involved in this research study, namely, Critical Race Theory, student voice, charter schools, and visual anthropology. I have organized the review of the literature thematically and presented a synthesis and analysis of these topics. Each theme begins by defining an important element within the study. Research and commentary accompany these definitions to help broaden the understanding of the terminology used in this study. Although the review of the literature is thematic, many of the issues could fall into any of the different themes, as many of these topics are interrelated.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical movement that examines and attempts to define racial interactions within society. CRT examines race in a broad perspective, including "economics, history, context, group and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). Importantly, CRT contains an activist dimension that seeks to change society for the better. "It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better" (p. 3). CRT emerged from the field of legal studies and has grown significantly over the past four decades, attracting a growing number of critical race scholars in its young history.

CRT has its roots in the 1970s. After the advancements of Brown v. Board of Education and the civil rights movement slowed, progress in racial equality was at a

trickle. Early CRT thinkers realized that new strategies would be needed in order to continue progressing toward equality in society. Emerging from the work of scholars within the field of Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory was born as a means of addressing and analyzing the intersection of race and law. These scholars and legal activists were particularly interested in the application of the legal institutions upon communities of color, often disproportionally applied to communities of color within criminal law, as well as in the perceptions of legal equity and service by persons of color. The first conference for Critical Race Theory was held at a convent outside of Madison, Wisconsin during the summer of 1989. Many of the founders and important thinkers of CRT were there to create the movement organized by Kimberle Crenshaw, Stephanie Phillips, and Neil Gotanda. Two of the major figures of early CRT were Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, with Freeman (1995) having written a foundational piece that documented how the Supreme Court legitimized racism. Other key figures in CRT include Kimberle Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrance III, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams. Some of the key works were by Bell (1980) and (1995), Matsuda (1987), Crenshaw (1995), Gotanda (1995), and Lawrence (1995).

Race and issues of racial injustice are difficult topics for many Americans to openly discuss without fear. The term "racist" and the difficult realities of people who have endured racial injustice in their communities easily flood the discussion table, provoking an emotional dialogue. These emotional dialogues do not always lead to productive discussions concerning how deeply entrenched racism is in our society, school systems, and dominant culture (Omi & Winant, 1986). Racial injustice, however,

operates within society as a system of oppression (Parker & Lynn, 2002), and for this reason, amongst many, Critical Race Theory as a "discourse was generated by legal scholars of color devoted to uncovering the often hidden subtext of race in society" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 10). The racial subordination of a people, and their voice, truly exists beyond the role of the "victim" or the misinformed; it affects each of us, whether we are perpetrators, victims, or bystanders. Critical Race Theory is extremely useful in examining the subtle part race plays in the continued omission of voices of color within high school takeovers and educational reform. In this specific study, CRT served to examine the voices of students of color. Counterstories provided an avenue by which the voices and stories of students of color were added to the mainstream discourse concerning the takeover of their education.

As CRT expands and grows, many spin-off movements have emerged from this field. Although not all spin-offs of CRT agree upon all aspects of their studies, a few basic tenets exist. Solórzano (1997) and Solorzano and Bernal (2001) have identified at least five basic themes of CRT in education that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of the framework.

Five Basic Themes of CRT in Education

The intercentricity of race and racism. Racism is normal in American society. Because it has been ingrained in our society for generations, racism has become normalized as an ordinary part of how society functions. Although it did much to eradicate blatant legalized racism, the civil rights movement did little to remedy the racism that people of color face every day on a personal level. Race and racism can also

be viewed at the intersection it shares with other forms of oppression, such as gender and class discrimination.

The challenge to dominant ideology. CRT challenges the dominant ideology that has normalized racism and oppression. It challenges the societal ideas of objectivity, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity; it also challenges the deficit models that have been created to justify the existence and continuation of these practices.

The commitment to social justice. CRT is committed to the ideals of social justice. CRT "offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression" (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 313). It is dedicated to the elimination of racism, sexism, and class oppression and to the empowerment of minority groups.

The centrality of experiential knowledge. The experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding race and racism in society. The lived experiences of people of color are a valuable, integral part of CRT, and give insight to racial subordination. Solorzano and Bernal (2001) have given some examples of methodologies used to capture this experiential knowledge, such as storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, *testimmonios, cuentos, consejos*, chronicles, and narratives.

The interdisciplinary perspective. CRT challenges traditional and historical views and analyses of race and racism. It attempts to view race and racism by placing them both in historical and contemporary context while using interdisciplinary methods. CRT attempts to give a view of race and racism that does not follow dominant ideology

and uses methodologies that will better allow the researcher to understand the perspectives of the oppressed.

Critical Race Methodology

In utilizing and applying CRT as a research framework, it is important to point out the three main goals of using CRT, as described by Parker and Lynn (2002), and its connections to qualitative research methodology: (a) to present storytelling and narratives as valid approaches through which to examine race and racism in the law and in society, (b) to argue for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct, and (c) to draw important relationships between race and other axes of domination (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 10).

Although CRT has been used as a framework to guide the research and analysis of this research study, a Critical Race methodology was used to guide the process of ascertaining research. Though it values the voices of persons of color, CRT is not a methodology. Critical Race methodology is the means of ascertaining data for use in CRT studies. In addition to the vital reliance on storytelling and counterstorytelling, Critical Race methodology provides us with tools to ponder and analyze issues of social justice within education. This methodology has helped me, as researcher, find data outside the norms of traditional research methodologies and is explained in detail in Chapter Three. Duncan (2002) has explained the importance of applying such a critical lens to weeding out any semblance of normalcy attached to racial oppression. The normalcy of subtle oppression in high-needs schools that often lack quality curriculum and credentialed teachers can often become so engrained in urban communities that the

role of systemic oppression is dismissed as not present or valid (Duncan, 2002). Thus, the presence of race awareness in scholarship on education can provide a better understanding of the oppression present to the eyes of students, particularly as they gauge successes and failures within educational reform.

One of Duncan's criticisms concerns the overuse of stories. Duncan (2002) has explained, "Such criticism points to an over-reliance on evidence that derives from subjective ontological categories . . . accessible to only one actor" (p. 106). In order to overcome using stories that are heavy on perceptions of reality and light on facts, he has suggested that Critical Race methodology use multiple ontological categories that give larger meaning to a set of stories. This approach entails, "bringing to bear on our work data from different sources, for example, sociolinguistic, interview, observational, statistical, documentary and so forth" (Duncan, 2002, p. 106). This research study attempts to use different sources by implementing interviews, photographic evidence, a focus group, and a researcher who is also a participant with the students and can verify and validate their evidence.

Critical Race Theory and Education

One of the major subgroups of Critical Race Theory is within the field of education. To better answer the question "Why use CRT?'" it is necessary to examine the arguments for incorporating CRT within educational and qualitative research.

First, due to the academic nature with which CRT exposes the subtle ways race serves as a determinant in social and legal policy, CRT can be further utilized in exposing common determinants within the public educational system (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

These problems are endemic, systemic, and deeply ingrained in historical consciousness and ideological choices about race, which in turn have directly shaped the U.S. legal system and the ways people think about education, law, racial categories, and privilege (Parker & Lynn, 2002).   This influence has been particularly strong in shaping urban education and the social ideals associated with viewing education as a civil and human right in America.

Second, traditional academic writing on public education has largely failed to deal fairly with people of color outside of neatly packaged narratives regarding school integration and civil rights-era school segregation. In addition, popular media and politicians say far more than they are willing to implement regarding equitable reform in America's failing educational system. Traditional education research has failed to be critical and promote racial equality. According to Parker and Lynn (2002) educational research has:

> (a) ignored historically marginalized groups by simply not addressing their concerns;
> (b) relied heavily on genetic or biological determinist perspectives to explain away complex social educational problems; or
> (c) epiphenomenized or de-emphasized race by arguing that the problems minority students experience in schools can be understood via class or gender analyses that do not fully take race, culture, language, and immigrant status into account. (p. 13)

Third, incorporation of CRT into the educational research dialogue can provide a more comprehensive bridge between social science research on race and race relations and the qualitative research currently under way within the field of educational policy. If this bridge can be successfully built, perhaps it will serve to better inform both fields in the service of students in high-needs schools (Parker & Lynn, 2002). A larger step toward

achieving the equality that Thurgood Marshall discussed many years ago as, "getting the same thing, at the same time and in the same place" might just take the integration of student voice through CRT counterstorytelling (Duncan, 2002, p. 93). Perhaps a bridge between disciplines can further encourage the work of critical race theorists who:

> seek to break the dominance of storytelling about success of merit, equality, the market, and objectivity that is so deeply entrenched and accepted unquestioningly by larger society through the legitimating of [educational] narratives of racial discrimination and the power of the law [and American public school system] used against persons of color. (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 12)

With this combination of work, excellent research can be accomplished.

Critical Race Theory and the Counterstory

Duncan (2002) has stressed the deeply embedded nature of oppression in public schools. He has written that stories about people of color are integral to eradicating the normalization of racial inequality. Duncan (2002) wrote:

> I regard the stories of people of colour as necessary to disrupt the allochronic discourses that inform racial inequality in schools and society. In particular, they provide potent counter-points to challenge the existing narratives that shape how we understand the post-Civil Rights schooling experiences and outcomes of students of colour. As various scholars argue, racially particular, culturo-centric, standpoint knowledge brings into relief the values, assumptions, categories, and concepts that inform racist epistemologies. (p. 101)

Without the stories of people of color, it remains difficult to understand the difficulties such individuals face and thus to eradicate these injustices. These voices are integral if positive change is to occur.

The stories that are written and recorded in American history tend to be those of the victors. These stories are seamed and stitched together to create a popular narrative that determines popular perceptions. A counterstory, however, is integral to a fuller

understanding of important events and historical time periods. Quite often counterstories are not genuinely sought out or are deemed unreliable or unnecessary by the victor. Critical Race Theorists posit that these stories "illustrate the ability of oppressed people to name their realities and warrant the prominence of narrative and storytelling in critical race theory in the field of education" (Duncan, 2002, p. 102). Much research has been dedicated to the subject of CRT storytelling in education including that of Gonzalez (1999), Villenas, Deyhle, and Parker (1999), Delgado Bernal (2002), Fernández (2002), Lynn (2002), and Solorzano and Yasso (2002). These stories enliven descriptions of events, places, and people, and can help scholars better document how race relations affect the lived experiences of students of color in America's public schools. This vital role is quite true in documenting the dismal state of education in many cities' urban cores; indeed, such is the case in Los Angeles.

Farber and Sherry (1995) have explained that storytelling and counterstorytelling are pertinent to educational scholarship in the following ways:

> 1. The storytellers view narratives as central to scholarship, while de-emphasizing conventional analytic measures;
> 2. They particularly value "stories from the bottom"—stories from women and people of color about their oppression;
> 3. They are less concerned than conventional scholars about whether stories are either typical or descriptively accurate, and they place more emphasis on the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of narration. (p. 283)

Counterstories contribute a great deal to conventional research in that they serve many purposes, most importantly requiring the researcher to examine realities through multiple perspectives, lenses, and voices. Although the Locke takeover by Green Dot occurred recently, endemic social injustices had been taking place in the school for much longer.

These injustices are intertwined with race and inequity. There are many stories to be told in a school like Locke. Relevant educational research, however, "has tended to undervalue the voices of Chicano [and Black] students by focusing too much attention on Chicano [and Black] school failure without exploring how these students make sense of their own lived realities" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 13).

In addition, incorporating CRT counterstories into education research is critical because it provides key, first-hand narratives with which to illustrate discrimination and racial injustices. Educational neglect constitutes educational discrimination. Such levels of subtle discrimination may be impossible to prove solely through traditional methodological approaches, thus the need for Critical Race methodology.

Moreover, Duncan's research (2002) has argued that discrimination is present with or without the incorporation of counterstorytelling because adherence to American educational systems is simultaneously adherence to a White dominant majority-constructed system. If this assertion is true, historically speaking, then in order to best understand the educational experiences of students of color, scholars and researchers must utilize counternarratives. To neglect these voices of color may be to support the research and methodologies that have sustained a race-based, meritocractic system of disparity within the public schooling available to students of color in Watts. This educational injustice could perpetuate racial disparities for generations to come.

A nearly 100-year old example of similar educational injustice based on race and an overt neglect of the student voice can be found in W. E. B DuBois's report on the state of public schools in Butte, Montana published in *The Crisis* in 1918, as outlined in

Duncan (2002). Though it looked at the disparities in Montana schools for young Black children, this work is relevant and applicable to the experience of Locke students in Watts, who constitute a majority Black and Latino population. DuBois (1995) compared and contrasted the advantages White students had in their schooling, access and support to pursue higher education, and exposure to quality curriculum to the situation of Black students within the same districts who were being systemically stopped from being able to pursue higher education due to the inferior curriculum offerings for students based on their race.

The conditions that DuBois wrote about in his 1918 publication are appallingly similar to many of the experiences of 2011 inner-city Los Angeles kids. These problems are still present within our society. If they join academic forces, CRT and educational research may be able to bring social/legal/political awareness to the lack of credentialed teachers in our youth's classrooms and the dearth of books and quality curricular resources. They can also reveal the similarities between conditions in segregated times and those in a postsegregation era. This type of scholarship mandates the use of the counterstories of "people of colour to explicate limited situations, [so that] we can rethink our research or pedagogy in accordance with the new knowledge that inheres in them and act upon it to realize our untested feasibilities" (Duncan, 2002, p. 108). A new era of urban school reform that incorporates student voice is possible, as is analysis of the school's takeover successes and failures. In this research, student voice was incorporated through interviews, and through photographic elicitation and photographic essays, a

strategy that borrows largely from the scholarly work being conducted in visual anthropology.

In order to bring in data from different sources and thus to bring credibility to the data, as Duncan (2002) has suggested, visual anthropology has been utilized in a variety of ways. In the stories of Locke students, visual anthropology served to incorporate "the use of fiction, artistic expression and/or aesthetics, and narrative story to paint a portrait of racialized life" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 17). A visual form of counterstorytelling allows the narrative to take shape and to give personality in ways not fully incorporated in academia, thus creating a platform by which students can affirm their lived experiences at Locke. This nontraditional type of research does, of course, bring with it a host of concerns regarding the appropriateness and reliability of CRT within education—a subject that will be discussed in the visual anthropology section of this chapter.

Critical Race Theory and Positionality

A methodological focal point of this research was to theorize the integral ways in which race affected the positionality of students of color within a charter school takeover. Critical Race Theory was utilized as framework in order to discover this positionality, whereas Critical Race Methodology provided the tools to ascertain that data. This research attempted to capture and publish the stories and perceptions of Locke students. This scholarship is race conscious in appreciating and incorporating the strong influence that race plays in policymaking in our society. Additionally, race is a key factor in educational inequity and social injustice for a number of reasons.

For the purpose of this project, the concept of a *differend*, or a disagreement of terms to "which all parties can agree, causing in such case members of the subjugated group to continue to suffer" will guide the justification of CRT's application of the counterstory (Duncan, 2002, p. 108). To begin with, no recorded dialogue could be found between the students of color at Locke High School and Green Dot Public Schools concerning the takeover. Without dialogue, no common language exists nor is there any possibility for an agreement in terms, or an acknowledgement of the conditions that may be holding these students of color back. Storytelling about the Locke takeover by the affected students offered a better background through which to understand what constitutes a quality charter school takeover.

Why the focus on student perception? Duncan (2002) described this approach best in work that looked at the need for a critical race ethnography lens in education. He wrote:

> critical race approaches allow us to rethink and reconstruct traditional school policy and practices around the insights of the greatest stakeholders—those who experience the brunt of educational injustice. It is crucial for explicating the taken for granted assumptions and practices that inform the reproductive nature of urban schools. Critical race theory makes the once invisible visible, as is the case of the analysis provided in this article. (Duncan, 2002, p. 110)

With this understanding, the invisible (the stories of the Locke students) was given a platform upon which to become visible (voice collection and publication through interview and photographic essays). Race, notions of the meaning of "urban education," and issues of social justice pervade the experiences of students of color in American schools. If these individuals bear the brunt of that injustice, to what extent is a Charter

Management Organization responsible for soliciting and incorporating these needs and perceptions into school reform?

Student Voice

All students have a story to tell. Many of these students face very real difficulties and problems that they are forced to overcome on a daily basis. These problems occur both in their homes and in their communities. Overcoming these "traumatic environments may produce daily acts of heroism in children as they negotiate a treacherous ghetto terrain (Anyon, 1997, p. 160). It is important for students to feel welcome and involved at school. Indeed, according to Barrett (2003), "Students who are satisfied with school and the features that it offers are less likely to drop out and more likely to perform well academically" (p. 351).

Student voice is the collective and individual voice and perception of students. Mitra (2008) has explained that student voice:

> can range from the most basic level of youth sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions to allowing young people to collaborate with adults to address the problems in their schools to youth taking the lead on seeking change. (p. 7)

Though it is important for student voices to be heard, it is also important for these student voices to be encouraged and given a proper audience. Student voice not only allows teachers and administration an inlet to the students' minds, but it also empowers students, giving them the opportunity to dialogue about issues that matter to them. At-risk students must become participants in the learning process in order to become more socially cognitive of the school and societal environments in which they reside (Collatos & Morrell, 2003). In finding their own voice, students become empowered and are able to

combat the social inequalities they face (Silva & Rubin, 2003). "The notion of voice is critical to understanding what children experience in school. Voice reveals the deeper meanings and perspectives of individuals and reflects learners' personal realities" (Dahl, 1995, p. 124). Schools need to ensure that the experiences students have at school are optimal to their development as life-long learners and to promoting autonomy, critical thinking skills, and social awareness within society.

When students are heard, they have the capacity to improve and change the school and environments in which they participate. Mitra (2003) has written, "Through increasing student voice in schools, students have the potential for contributing their opinions on a variety of levels, including sharing their views on problems and potential solutions in their schools" (p. 289). Who better to discuss problems with a school than the actual participants in the school who experience these problems on a daily basis? "Students are an excellent source of data and a force for data collection and analyses" (Yonezawa & Jones, 2009, p. 206).

In discussing the importance of individual voices in research, Freire (1996) wrote:

The silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world. (p. 30)

Students have the capacity to move research and discussions in meaningful directions. Students also have the ability to become critically cognizant of the world around them when they have the ability to participate in conversations concerning their own education. "Learning from children's voices allows us to know at a deeper level who children are as learners and, because we have that knowledge, to expand and enrich our sense of what it

means to teach" (Dahl, 1995, p. 130). Students have some of the best viewpoints to share and discuss to fix problems at school.

When students participate in the world around them and are able to examine and critique this world, they gain critical thinking skills and the ability to navigate a world that views them as an "other" or outsider. Students gain important critical thinking skills and beliefs about themselves when they are listened to. "Self-esteem and academic achievement rise when students are allowed to take control over aspects of their education" (Barrett, 2003, p. 351). In their study of the interaction between negative events (locus of control) and school satisfaction, Huebner, Ash, and Laughlin (2001) found that students who felt they had little control over negative events (e.g., external locus of control) tended to be less satisfied with school" (p. 167). Allowing students to participate and control events around them helps them to become proactive within their own lives and education.

Considering the literature, it is interesting that students had no voice in the takeover and reconstitution of the high school. It was a teacher-led and signed petition that was voted on by the school board. At no point in the process were students given a choice or asked for their opinion. They had no control over the events concerning the takeover of the high school and no capacity through which to become self-determined agents in the events unfolding.

Student voice often overlaps with youth engagement and, as a result, "both fields involve young people working with community developers, activists, university researchers, and/or educators" (Yonezawa & Jones, 2009, p. 205). The use of student-

driven data to drive reform within education is both important and necessary in order to bring required changes to students in education. Yonezawa and Jones (2009) have written, "Student voice and youth engagement provide examples of motivating youth academically through data-driven reform" (p. 206). Involvement in their own education gives students a critical consciousness of the events happening around them that influence their education. With this consciousness, they can help dictate the path they will take in education and use their voice to help make necessary changes to the system. Mitra (2008) wrote, "[student voice] can enable youth to meet their own developmental needs and can strengthen ownership of the educational reform process" (p. 7). Students have the capacity, and should have the forum, to be partners in the creation and reformation of their own education.

With so many students failing to graduate and dropping out of secondary schools in urban communities (Barton, 2006), finding effective and efficient measures to keep students actively attending school is of the utmost importance. Urban high schools are often faced with factors and challenges that make it difficult for students to stay in school (Osher & Fleischman, 2005). For example, many urban schools are large and overcrowded, and students who attend these overpopulated schools can easily become lost in the crowd (Kozol, 2005). As large percentages of urban high school students drop out (Books, 2004), there exists a critical need to focus on meeting the needs of students most at risk of not graduating. Consequently, such high dropout rates led to the disrepair of Locke under LAUSD, which may have prompted the Green Dot takeover. Student voice is integral to all of these areas of reform.

Visual Anthropology

In a traditional sense, anthropology is "the science that deals with the origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics, and social customs and beliefs of humankind" (Dictionary.com, 2010, para. 1). Simply put, anthropology is a field of studies centered around people and culture. In the words of Strong and Wilder (2009), "Anthropology studies human belief and behavior. Through comparison, it attempts to establish what is universal about all human cultures on the one hand, and what may be unique to a culture or cultures on the other" (p. 2). Visual anthropologists follow the same goals as other anthropologists. The major difference between the two is the means of data collection. Visual anthropologists use visual media to capture their data about a certain culture or group of people.

In defining visual anthropology, Strong and Wilder (2009) wrote, "Visual anthropology is a multidisciplinary field that joins the arts and the humanities with the social and biological sciences" (p. 1). It attempts to use the arts and humanities through visual representations in order to gain knowledge of a group of people. A visual is any type of art, handwriting, commercial, or work that is meant to be seen by others. According to Banks and Morphy (1997), "Visual Anthropology has become an established subdiscipline of sociocultural anthropology" (p. 1). Though it is a younger subdiscipline within anthropology, visual anthropology is an established and valuable field.

Looking more deeply into the field of visual anthropology, one can see that this discipline is divided into two major areas: the creation of visuals for anthropological purposes and the study of visuals created by a society.

> Visual anthropology is broad both in the substantive topics which it investigates and through the fact that it lies at the interface between anthropology and its audiences; it is as much concerned with the presentation and consumption of anthropological knowledge as with the production of that knowledge. (Banks & Murphy, 1997, p. 1)

The first area is concerned with the creation of visuals in order to better understand an anthropological study. The second area is the analysis of the visuals that a society uses. This area concerns photographs, film, advertising, and any other media that could be used to better understand a culture. This study will primarily concentrate on the first area of visual anthropology, the creation of visuals and the analysis of them.

One important methodological tool within anthropology that is critical to this study is that of ethnographic research. An ethnographer gathers research and explores the nature of a community, primarily through research. At the cross-section of ethnography and visual anthropology lies ethnographic photography: "Ethnographic photography may be defined as the use of photographs for the recording and understanding of cultures(s), both those of the subjects and of the photographers" (Scherer, 2003, p. 201). Photographs are a snapshot of a moment in time that can be analyzed and discussed later. Photographs have the capacity to store information and bring forth information not previously seen. Schwartz (1989) wrote, "Viewed as records, photographs are thought to reproduce the reality in front of the camera's lens, yielding an unmediated and unbiased visual report" (p. 120). Photographs have the capacity to recreate a time, place, or event

for somebody who was not present when the photograph was taken, which was exactly the aim when working with Locke High School students to capture their perceptions of takeover change within their school.

When considering the power and impact of photographs, we are aware that they can also recreate a moment in time for the photographer and anyone else who was there, serving as a reminder and visual aid to help them better comprehend that moment. "Photographs immeasurably increase the fixed points of factual reality and therefore speed up and give projective breadth to reliable conclusions" (Collier, 2003, p. 248). The photograph is raw data that enables the researcher to analyze and find meaning. Strong and Wilder (2009) wrote, "What makes a photograph ethnographic is not necessarily the intention of its production but how it is used to inform viewers ethnographically" (p. 201). The meaning given to the photograph by viewers may be quite different from the purpose set out by the photographer. Meaning is not found in the photograph but in the analysis and interpretation of the photograph. "They may be worth a thousand words, but it can be any thousand words" (Freeman, 2009, p. 61). The students have given meaning to the pictures within the photo essays they created. They gave meaning through the writing they added to the project. They were also able to give meaning as they discussed these pictures during the interview process.

According to Scherer (2003), the research methodology for the use of ethnographic photographs in anthropological inquiry includes:

> (1) detailed analysis of internal evidence and comparison of photographs with other images;
> (2) understanding of the history of photography, including technological constraints and conventions;

(3) study of the intention and purposes of the photographer and the manner in which images were used by their creator;

(4) study of the ethnographic subjects; and

(5) review of related historical evidence, including an examination of the uses to which images have been put by others. (pp. 201-202)

Within this research study, all of these areas were examined, except for point two, the history of photography and the technological constraints and conventions. All others were explored to better understand the research questions described in Chapter One.

An additional critical aspect of ethnographic photography is the role that each person plays in the life of a photograph: "The viewing process is a dynamic interaction between the photographer, the spectator, and the image; meaning is actively constructed, not passively received" (Schwartz, 1989, p. 120). The photographer has many decisions to make, ranging from who and what should be included in the photograph to the lighting and artistic values of a photograph. Though meaning is gleaned from the individual viewing the photograph, the photographer has decisions to make in the construction of the photographic reality—decisions that will be stored in the image for others to view later. The photographer has the main duty of setting parameters on what will be viewed—what will be allowed and not allowed within the frame of the picture.

Though it is the medium of information, the image does not *give* meaning or analysis: "The true challenge is not the search for information, which photographs contain in abundance, but rather it is the discovery of significance and meaning" (Collier, 2009, p. 20). The photograph is full of information—up to five megabytes worth of information for each picture used in this study. These pictures contain colors, places, people, light, and darkness. They are permanent snapshots of what the photographer saw

at a very specific moment. However, without analysis, comparison, contrasting, and

other analytical tools, the photograph cannot inform or help with an ethnographic study.

"Photographic images only record the surface; they cannot capture, or show, historical

change (as can collecting oral myths and histories)" (Freeman, 2009, p. 56). Though a

photographer may have bias about how the picture is taken, a camera is unbiased and

does not choose what to add and what to leave out of a picture. The image contains

everything within the camera frame during the time period the shutter was open. When

the shutter is opened, the camera does not discriminate or have preconceived notions

about what information should be contained in its frame. This unbiased attribute of the

camera may be beneficial to the researcher. "The camera need not be as selective and

can assist discovery of that which we did not see due to the complexity of the moment or

failed to appreciate due to our filters or lack of knowledge" (Collier, 2009, p. 27). The

image is an important partner in the relationship between photographer and spectator.

The spectator has a role of equal importance to that of the photographer. The

spectator has the job of creating meaning from a photograph. "Because photographs

trigger multiple meanings dependent upon the experiences of viewers, what is considered

significant may take the ethnographer by surprise, leading to unexpected revelations"

(Schwartz, 1989, p. 143). The photograph may help trigger memories and emotions

within the viewer that are important for the researcher to understand. The relationship

between researcher, image, and viewer is important in a photoethnographic study:

> We are not dependent only on our own eyes and minds; we can show photographs
> to others with knowledge and insight, including—perhaps most especially—
> people who are participants in the activities and circumstances seen in the
> photographs. When trying to "read" photographic images, this procedure expands

the range of information obtained and represents a unique characteristic of photographs as compared to written forms of recording. It also provides important background and contextual material that enriches other types of analysis. (Collier, 2009, p. 20)

Many different viewpoints and attitudes may be gained from the participants who take and examine a photograph. "Meaning is gained through context. Context (thus meaning) needs a story, an unfolding. To find meaning in a photograph, the viewer must lend it a narrative" (Freeman, 2009, p. 62). It is both the opportunity and the role of the viewer to give the photograph meaning, context, and story: "the photograph is not a message in the usual sense. It is, instead, the raw material for an infinite number of messages which each viewer can construct for himself" (Schwartz, 1989, p. 120). Meaning and, therefore, power, lies within the viewer of a photograph. This reception is where the story is told. Photograph viewers create, construct, remember, analyze, and give a story to this visual medium. Meaning is found in the words of the viewer rather than in the photograph.

Because the role of the spectator is so important in the process of ethnographic photography, an emerging method has arisen. Photo elicitation interviews have emerged as an important methodology for ascertaining meaning from photographs: "Photo-interviewing, used in conjunction with traditional ethnographic methods of data collection, enhances our ability to understand the meaning of everyday life for community members" (Schwartz, 1989, p. 152). This tool helps to give a point of reference between the community member and the researcher. It allows the viewer to create meaning and understanding for the researcher and others. According to Schwartz (1989), "The photo interview is a forum for the active construction of meaning" (p. 143). The photograph offers a starting point and visual context for a story to be told. The

picture can trigger a memory, recreate an emotion, and offer further insight to a story. This tool has become an effective method of helping the researcher to understand community members and to collect invaluable data: "Photographic interviewing is like a can-opener into complex community involvement, even before the field worker has had time to acquire a background for his own understanding" (Collier, 2003, p. 245).

As discussed in the student voice section, students have the capacity to become researchers themselves and to help create the story of their environments. A major advantage of photoethnography is that it makes it easy for the subject to become researcher and photographer, whereby "subjects engage as cultural investigators, as researchers in their own right, and as curators, with a share in the representation of their own lives" (Wilder, 2009, p. 35). Photoethnography can empower students to become active participants in the creation and repair of their own school environment. Helping students document their school and lives helps them to understand the world around them and to look deeper at the issues that face them: "[C]apturing and analyzing snapshots of students' real experiences may help ground new knowledge in terms of what they currently know as well as making them more aware of issues that they can address to improve their habits" (Land, Smith, Park, Beabout, & Kim, 2009, p. 65). Becoming researchers and documenting the world they live in can improve their position and bring about impactful change.

Another advantage of photoethnography is that it helps noncommunity members understand the authentic experiences and perceptions of community members. "Photography puts cameras into the hands of user-researchers to capture authentic

perceptions of the user experience" (McFall & Beacham, 2006, p. 21). For the

population in the study, photoethnography is an excellent research-gathering tool in

addition to the other methodologies employed. Conducting a similar photoethnography

project, McFall and Beacham (2006) wrote:

> Photoethnography is especially useful in gathering data from children. The camera provides a vehicle for them to represent ideas they may not otherwise be able to express. Developmentally, the adolescent population involved in this study is supported by this type of data collection, since they are at an age where they still want to have fun, but are often intimidated by activities that could cause them to appear less than competent (i.e. drawing, writing stories, etc.). The photoethnographic methodology is successful because it is fun and encourages the sharing of ideas while working. (p. 27)

Though researchers have the capacity to gather information in diverse ways,

photoethnography is an interesting and fun way for students to participate in data

collection; it also gives them a starting point for discussing the important issues at hand.

Though photoethnography is important, "interviewing clients upon completion of the

picture-taking phase is still critical, and the follow up is essential in drawing appropriate

conclusions from the images shared" (McFall & Beacham, 2006, p. 27). Once again, the

story must be told from the student perspective. In this project, the interview process

allowed the students to give meaning and stories to the photographs they took.

Notably, however, some concerns and criticisms of ethnographic photography

have been raised. Crowe (2003) wrote:

> Concerns about the role of photography in ethnographic fieldwork and anthropology range from commentary about wounded artistic integrity and the inconvenience of having to use photography to represent and document certain information to anthropological concerns and fears that photographers not only document but "capture" images—composing information rather than documenting reality. (p. 470)

The students were able to capture their reality in photographs in ways that were meaningful to them. It was also the job of the students to explain how the picture documented the reality in which they lived. One of the purposes of the writing section of the photo essay was to explain what the photograph represented and to give meaning to the information within the photograph. Even as a photograph is *subjective*, it is *reality* to its maker. It is both art *and* document. Within this study, students had the opportunity to be both tour guide and historian. Their stories were subjective; but they are their stories and we must hear them. Crowe (2003) was correct in writing, "No matter what models are applied, all ethnography is subjective" (p. 472). With an understanding of the subjectivity of this qualitative study, it became my task, as the researcher, to create a valid and trustworthy study out of the stories and photographs that the students offered.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are a relatively new innovation in American public education. They are promoted by the current presidential administration, encouraged by state legislatures, and sought after by parents who desire school choice and options for their children. Charter schools, as a whole, range across a wide spectrum of schools. Many of these charter schools are traditional elementary, middle, and high schools; others specialize in specific grades, specific themes, or specific populations. This section will discuss what a charter school is, including a brief history of the national charter school movement. From there, the scope will narrow the focus on California charter schools, their history, legislation, and statistics. The following section will be on charter schools in Los Angeles. The section will conclude with a critical look at the organization Green

Dot Public Schools, which is the Charter Management Organization responsible for the takeover of Locke High School.

Charter schools are publicly funded and sponsored schools that operate outside of the control of local school districts, free from many of the rules and laws of traditional public schools (Brouilette, 2002). Charter schools have more autonomy to fit the needs of their specific student population. They are public schools that do not charge tuition and cannot discriminate about who attends the school. Nobody is assigned to attend, teach, or manage the school; all participants are there by their own will and choice.

Charter schools receive public funding. The students who attend these schools come with the funding that would have gone to a public school. All public funds assigned to a charter student, whether the funds are local, state, or national, follow the student to the charter school. These funds include special education, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I funding, free and reduced lunch, and any other special funding.

There are two main types of charter schools: start-up and conversion. A start-up school is a brand new charter school created through the state's charter school laws. A conversion school is a public school that decides to become a charter school. In certain states, some private schools have been allowed to convert to charter schools. According to the organizational website US Charter Schools (2010), the intention of most charter school legislation is to:

1. Increase opportunities for learning and access to quality education for all students
2. Create choice for parents and students within the public school system
3. Provide a system of accountability for results in public education

4. Encourage innovative teaching practices
5. Create new professional opportunities for teachers
6. Encourage community and parent involvement in public education
7. Leverage improved public education broadly. (Buckley & Schneider, 2007, p. 2)

Moreover, charter school organizers have three primary reasons for founding a charter school; they aspire to "realize an alternative vision of schooling, to serve a specific population, or to gain autonomy" (Buckley & Schneider, 2007, p. 2).

At the heart of charter schools is the charter itself. Charter schools work under a charter, or contract, from a governing board, usually a school district or county board of education. This charter is an agreement with the governing body that gives the school more autonomy to structure the school how it desires in order to achieve student outcomes.

According to Miron and Nelson (2002), a certain barter is involved: "Charter schools will receive enhanced autonomy over curriculum, instruction and operations. In exchange, they must agree to be held more accountable for results than other public schools" (p. 3). The charter document explains how the school will be structured, what student outcomes will be achieved, and how these outcomes will be achieved. The charter acts as the school's mission statement, explaining how the school will operate. Charter schools are seen as an alternative to traditional schooling. Charter schools are also seen as laboratories that can be duplicated in other charter schools or in the sphere of public education. Charter schools "serve as laboratories for education. Ideas developed and tested by charter schools have unlocked potential in students of every background and are driving reform throughout many school districts" (Obama, 2010, para. 1). One of

the promises of charter schools is that they can serve as laboratories of innovation—they can be public education's research and development arm.

The History of the Charter School Movement

The idea and evolution of the charter movement began many years before the first charter school was created. New England educator Ray Budde is said to have coined the term "charter schools" in the 1970s. Budde proposed that groups of teachers could be "chartered" by the school board for a period of three to five years. One of the pivotal events in the genesis of charter schools occurred in a speech by Albert Shanker. Speaking at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., Shanker—then president of the American Federation of Teachers—gave an address proposing the idea of charter schools (Brouillette, 2002). In this speech, Shanker recommended the creation or implementation of a school where "small groups of teachers and parents would submit research-based proposals outlining plans to educate kids in innovative ways" (Kahlenberg, 2008, para. 2). Working with legislators, Shanker helped Minnesota create the first charter school laws in the United States. When charter school legislation moved away from Shanker's original idea, he opposed them (Peterson, 2010). However, the idea of charter schools spread, and the following year, California followed Minnesota and created a set of charter school laws. By 1995, charter school laws had been enacted in 19 states. By 2003, charter schools were in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In the 2007-08 school year, 4,388 charter schools were in operation in the United States, serving roughly 1,047,000 students (US Charter Schools, 2010). By 2009, those numbers grew to 4,624 schools serving 1,536,099 students (Allen & Consoletti, 2010). The growth of

charter schools continues; for the 2009-2010 school year, 419 new charter schools

opened.

Charter schools, on average, receive less money than traditional public schools

from local and state governments:

> Among reporting charter schools, the average amount of per pupil funding
> they received was $7,286, and the average cost per pupil was $8,001.
> According to the National Center of Education Statistics, conventional
> public schools received $10,754 per pupil and spent $9,056 per pupil.
> Looking at the national picture, charters are only receiving 68 percent of
> what conventional public schools receive. (Allen & Consoletti, 2010, p.5)

Additionally, the majority of charter school students are minority, 52%; at-risk, 50%; or

low-income, 54% (National Charter School Research Project, 2009). Notably, also:

> to meet the demand for quality public education for all of America's children, the
> U.S. Department of Education has vigorously supported the expansion of school
> choice options. In the last eight years, the Department of Education has provided
> $.8 billion in start-up money for individual schools and over $320 million in
> facilities funding. (United States Department of Education, 2008, p. 1)

Charter Schools in California

After Minnesota, California was the next state to create charter school laws. It

has seen profound growth, primarily due to the state's strong charter laws. In the Annual

Survey of America's Charter Schools, Allen and Consoletti (2010) gave California's

charter school laws an "A" grade and ranked it 3rd of the 40 states. In 1992, the Charter

Schools Act, SB 1448, initiated charter schools in California with a cap of 100 schools.

In 1998, AB 544 changed many of the rules governing charter schools and created an

expanded charter school cap, which could be extended each year. In 2003, AB 1137

created performance requirements for charter school renewals and mandated more

oversight by charter authorities. In 2005, AB 740 changed the funding of charter schools (EdSource, 2011).

In 2011, charter schools served 365,027 students in 912 charter schools (EdSource, 2011). California is important to the charter school debate because of the multiple types of schools it allows to open each year, including both charter start-ups and school conversions. As discussed, start-up charters are entirely new entities that begin from the ground up. These schools find their own facility, students, and teachers. Conversions, as their name suggests, are charter schools that were formerly public schools. They often maintain the same facilities, students, and teachers. The school researched in this study is a conversion charter school.

Looking at charter schools in California on a much more general level, researchers and informed educational reformists must take note that charter high schools "tend to service students who are markedly more disadvantaged than those of traditional high schools" (Edsource, 2010, para. 4). And, of the nearly 3,000 new charter schools that have opened their doors since the success of early charter legislation in the 1990s, 733 charter schools have claimed academic responsibility over 280,000 of California's children, nearly 30% of all charter students in the nation (US Charter schools, 2010). Though a guiding belief is that the high academic standards, small class size, and innovative teaching philosophies characteristic of charter schools can yield the most academic and social benefits for urban youth of failing public school districts, absent from discussions is whether these laudable tenets of charter schools are actually realized equitably across geographic, socioeconomic, and racial demographics.

Charter Schools in Los Angeles

Los Angeles contains more charter schools than any other U.S. city (Landsberg, Smith, & Blume, 2010); there are 161 charter schools within the city, serving 58,000 students (Posnick-Goodwin, 2010). Nearly 9% of students attend public charter schools. Granada Hills Charter High School, a former LAUSD school, is possibly the largest charter in the nation with over 4,000 students (*The Los Angeles Times*, 2011a).

In recent years, the charter school movement in Los Angeles has been driven by philanthropy. In the Los Angeles area, philanthropists are shaping the charter school movement. The two largest donors in the Los Angeles area contributing to the charter movement in the city are the Broad Foundation and the Gates Foundation. The goals of these two organizations are to create market-based schooling that are data-driven and rewarded or closed based on their performance (Barkan, 2011). Their motivation for funding charter schools is to create healthy competition within the schools (Broad Foundation, 2011). These philanthropists shape the charter school movement, requiring schools to work toward certain goals in order to receive money (Coombs & Shaffer, 2008). These philanthropies conduct much of their own research in the field of education in order to make decisions and policies. Recently, ICEF Public Schools, a Charter Management Organization, received a 10.5 million dollar bailout, led by former Los Angeles mayor Richard Riordan, Eli Broad, and the Gates Foundation (Blume, 2010b). Since the year 2000, Eli Broad has given 56 million dollars in grants to charter schools (Posnick-Goodwin, 2010). Many of the large Charter Management Organizations in Los

Angeles—Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Green Dot Public Schools, and ICEF—rely on this public funding in order to run their organizations.

Interestingly, these philanthropists have not confined their giving to the charter school movement. The organization Teach for America recently secured 100 million dollars from Eli Broad and three other philanthropists (Blume, 2011b). These donations from philanthropists are shaping the educational landscape in Los Angeles and on a national level. The beliefs of these founders and the money they provide have been driving the direction of school reform in the Los Angeles area.

Green Dot Public Schools

Green Dot Public Schools is a nonprofit organization that operates 15 high schools in the Los Angeles area and another in New York City. The organization was founded in 1999 by Steve Barr and opened its first school during the following year, 2000, under the name Animo Leadership Charter High School. This first school found success and two years later, in August of 2002, the organization opened a second campus, Animo Inglewood Charter High School. After successfully opening two campuses in the Inglewood area, Steve Barr paired up with boxing legend Oscar De La Hoya to open up a third school. Animo Oscar De La Hoya Charter High School opened in August of 2003 in the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles. Continuing success helped Barr and Green Dot open two schools the following year. Both Animo South Los Angeles High School and Animo Venice Charter High School were opened in August of 2004. These schools have been nicknamed "the founding five schools" (Green Dot Public Schools, 2010).

With five successful schools spread out across Los Angeles, Green Dot Public Schools was creating small-scale change in those neighborhoods. After founding the original five schools, Steve Barr attempted to work with Los Angeles Unified School District to take over Jefferson High School in South Los Angeles. Jefferson was one of the lowest performing schools in the city and state and had been rocked by a series of race riots at the school. Denied by the school district, Barr decided to open five schools in the area and to compete for the students who would attend Jefferson. After holding a lottery for the 640 positions, the schools opened in September of 2006. In the fall, only four of the five schools opened, and one of them, Animo Social Justice, was closed after the 2009-2010 school year, amid much community frustration. The remaining three, Animo Pat Brown Charter High School, Animo Ralph Bunche Charter High School, and Animo Jackie Robinson Charter High School continue to function (Green Dot, 2010).

Although Barr and Green Dot had had their eye on Locke High School for years, they actively sought management of the school in 2007. In 2007, the organization was able to obtain signatures from over half of the certificated faculty at Locke High School; however, after a faculty meeting with district leadership, 17 teachers rescinded their signatures (Rubin, 2007d). Without access to the school, Green Dot followed its Jefferson model, and opened two schools in the Locke High School area in September of 2007. These two schools were Animo Locke Tech and Animo Watts 2 Charter High Schools (Rubin, 2007a).

With two schools opened near Locke, the school board discussed whether to hand the school over to Green Dot Public Schools. After a three-hour public discussion, the

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school board voted 5-2 to give management to Green Dot on September 11, 2007 (Rubin & Blume, 2007). In September of 2008, Green Dot opened Locke as six separate schools, in addition to the two that were started the year before. These schools were Animo Locke 1, Animo Locke 2, Animo Locke 3, Animo Locke 4, Locke Launch to College Academy 1, and Locke Launch to College Academy 2. Since the first year of the takeover, the Locke Launch to College Academies have combined and a new school has emerged, Animo Locke ACE Academy.

The Locke takeover model called for dividing Locke into smaller, separate schools. Whereas the schools share some services, sports, a cafeteria, and other elements, the schools maintain their autonomy. Though the schools may work together on facility issues, such as bells, lunch, and schedule, each school is responsible for its own students, curriculum, and discipline. In 2008, the school was set up so that the new schools, or incubator schools, would start with 9th-graders and build their school by a grade each school year until it was a full 9-12 school. The remaining students who had started Locke under LAUSD would be placed in the Locke Launch to College Academies. The academies began as 10-12 schools and decreased a grade each year. The second year, as the incubator schools became 10-12, the academies decreased to 11-12. In the last year of existence, the academy, now combined, had only 12th-graders, whereas the incubator schools had grades 9-11. In the 2011-2012 school year, with the academy gone, the Locke transformation will be complete with the academy disappearing and the remaining seven schools will serve as Locke High School.

After the Locke takeover began, Steve Barr and Green Dot began receiving national attention. Green Dot officials were invited to speak with Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education. The Locke takeover has been examined and used as a possible model for taking over failing schools nation-wide. Green Dot is now considered one of the forefront charter school management companies in the United States and Steve Barr, a leading educational innovator (McGray, 2009).

Locke High School

Alain Leroy Locke High School (LHS), located at the intersection of San Pedro St. and East 111th Street, welcomed its first freshman class in 1967. LHS fits within the research scope of this study of public school reform and student voice quite well as the school was built in response to the devastating 1965 Watts riots that damaged the surrounding community; the event that started the riots had occurred just five blocks away from Locke. In a report investigating the causes of the 1965 Watts riots, The McCone Commission found that the rioted area was plagued by low educational achievement and lacked the educational opportunity that was prevalent in advantaged areas of the city. The commission wrote, "We propose that the programs for the schools in disadvantaged areas be vastly reorganized and strengthened so as to strike at the heart of low achievement and break the cycle of failure" (McCone & Christopher, 1965, para. 1).

Throughout the years, the school demographics closely followed the racial trends of the surrounding neighborhood. Though it was a predominantly African American neighborhood when the school opened, Watts has changed so that a majority of its

population is now Latina/o. Locke High School has followed these trends and the school is now 65.6% Latina/o, 34.2% African American, 0.15% Pacific Islander, and 0.07% White. Table 1 includes data enrollment of Locke High School by ethnicity for the previous 10 school years.

The school was meant to be a beacon of hope in a devastated community. Named after Alain Leroy Locke, the first African American Rhodes scholar, the intent of building the school was to provide hope and opportunity to an impoverished, predominately African American Watts neighborhood. The story of a contemporary Locke landscape of educational opportunity differs vastly, however, from the presumed beacon of hope expected. This difference is particularly true when examining the past ten years of Locke history, in which the school was taken over by the Charter Management Organization Green Dot Public Schools in 2008.

Table 1

Locke High School Demographics by Year

School Year	Total Enroll-ment	Latina/o Enroll-ment	Latina/o Enroll-ment by %	African American Enroll-ment	African American Enroll-ment by %	Other	Other Enroll-ment by %	Multiple ethnic-ities or no response
2009-10	1,277	837	65.5%	437	34.2%	3	0.2%	0
2008-09	1,800	1212	67.3%	564	31.3%	7	0.3%	17
2007-08	2,613	1687	64.5%	901	34.4%	10	0.3%	12
2006-07	2,771	1833	66.1%	908	32.7%	15	0.5%	15
2005-06	3,122	2005	64.2%	1107	35.4%	10	0.3%	0
2004-05	3,410	2146	62.9%	1255	36.8%	9	0.2%	0
2003-04	3,088	1937	62.7%	1144	37%	7	0.2%	0
2002-03	3,048	1886	61.8%	1142	37.4%	20	0.6%	0
2001-02	2,544	1568	61.6%	954	37.5%	22	0.8%	0
2000-01	2,432	1469	60.4%	926	38%	27	1.1%	0

Source: EdData, 2010

Whereas the first students in 1967 enjoyed a beautiful state-of-the-art campus with a hand-picked staff (Foote, 2008), the school never achieved its intended goals of providing an adequate education to the students of Watts. The perpetual violence of the surrounding neighborhood has plagued Locke since its induction. Within weeks of the school's opening, police were called in to contain a "rock and bottle throwing melee that erupted after dismissal" (Foote, 2008, p.19). Violence has persisted through the years with continual fights, riots, and even murders on and around the campus.

Locke has been plagued by many of the social ills that descended upon Los Angeles and inner-city neighborhoods around the country. From the crack-cocaine epidemic to the growth of gangs in schools, LHS has been forced to deal with many of the problems that emerge from impoverished urban centers. Situated in the so-called "gang capital of the United States" (Martinez, 2007), the attendance area that LHS covers is home to a large number of gangs and crews. LHS alone has more than a dozen Crip gangs at the school (Foote, 2008). When rival gang members are placed in the same school, violence and tragedy are given space to occur. Regularly at the bottom of district and state Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports, Academic Performance Index (API), and test scores, LHS has been in constant fix mode.

To be clear, here are the definitions and significance of AYP and API. AYP stands for Adequate Yearly Performance and is an indicator of the overall quality and progress a school is making. It was created under the No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, and allows the United States Department of Education to establish a standard by which it can understand how every public school and district in the state is performing. This

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indicator is based upon standardized testing (United States Department of Education, 2010). API stands for Academic Performance Index. It measures the academic performance of schools within the state of California. Scores range from 200-1000. Though a few indicators add to the API, such as attendance, graduation, and CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) pass rates, its main indicator is standardized testing. These numbers are used to compare and rank schools across the state and to give the public more information on school quality (California Department of Education, 2011). Both AYP and API scores for Locke serve as constant reminders to the students, staff, and community that Locke ranks well below the majority of schools in the state and in the nation. (Table 2)

From 1996 to 2007, Locke reported violence-related crimes in double digits. Reports of assaults with a deadly weapon ranged from a low of 3 in 2001-2002 to a high of 27 in 1998-1999 (Snell, 2005). Also reported were robberies, sex offenses, possession of weapons, drug use, and property crimes; all of these appallingly high (Snell, 2005). In 2008, a race riot broke out with a reported 600 students involved. The authorities were called and about 110 police officers arrived, many in riot gear, to put down the violence (Blume & Landsberg, 2008). The changing demographics and interracial difficulties in the neighborhoods played out in the halls of Locke as a race riot. To many observing the conditions of Locke, the violence that plagued the school from within its hallways appeared to be as systemic and cyclical as the conditions of violence that plagued the community outside of the school walls.

Table 2

Locke High School API and AYP Scores for 2000-01 to 2009-10

School Year	API	AYP Met
2009-10	539	No
2008-09	515	No
2007-08	511	No
2006-07	504	No
2005-06	488	No
2004-05	450	No
2003-04	*	*
2002-03	*	*
2001-02	385	+
2000-01	370	+

Source: EdData, 2010

* Not enough students tested to receive score

+ AYP did not exist until after this year

Change was on the horizon, however. In May of 2007, Green Dot Public Schools, a Charter Management Organization (CMO), publically announced that it had obtained over half of the signatures of the certified staff in a petition showing interest in transforming Locke High School into a public charter school within its charge. Gathering teacher signatures is just one possible method of converting a public school into a charter school. According to Senate Bill (SB) 1448, a group of teachers can initiate the conversion process of a public school into a charter school if half of the teachers sign a petition of intent.

On May 10, 2007, with the school in chaos and with eventual rioting, Steve Barr, founder and president of Green Dot Public Schools, held a conference in front of Locke High School announcing the potential takeover. This emotional press conference was given in front of an intensely volatile school community. Two days previously, Frank

Wells, the school principal who was popular with the students, had been escorted off campus by school security and relieved of his principal duties for allowing teachers to pass around a Green Dot charter petition during class time (Rubin, 2007c). Wells was African American and many students felt that his removal constituted a racial divide of some sort, leaving many frustrated and confused. While announcements were being made about the school's new independence, an insurrection was happening inside. As a result of this press conference, a small riot broke out in the school. As one magazine reported, "Barr had inadvertently started a riot at the school he promised to save" (Beller, 2007, para. 4). Days after the announcement, officials from Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) met with teachers and explained to them the exact ramifications of their signature (Rubin, 2007a). After the meeting, 17 of the 41 signers asked to have their signature removed from the petition, leaving far less than half of the former teaching staff signed on for the takeover.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2007 the school board of LAUSD decided, in a 5-2 decision, to give control of Locke High School to Green Dot Public Schools beginning fall of 2008. This decision would give Green Dot Public Schools almost a full year to prepare for the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. While Green Dot Public Schools prepared for the ensuing school year, 2007-2008 would prove to be a difficult school year for students, teachers, and administration. With an interim principal returning from retirement and put in place to lead Locke, many felt that LAUSD was not interested in ensuring that the school was prepared to be handed over to Green Dot. The school year included assaults on teachers and administrators, multiple arsons, including the library

and snack booth on the football field, bomb threats, gang fights, parent fights, race riots, and many other problems of a school falling apart. Though the takeover of Locke High School proved to be a big story, the largest story of the year centered on a race riot that rocked the troubled school. Making national press, the small gang fight turned race riot, proved to be the largest story of the year and more proof that Locke High School was in need of change (Foote, 2008). On June 30, 2007, Locke High School was handed over to Green Dot Public Schools and on Monday, September 8, 2008, Locke High School started its first day as eight small charter schools under the management of Green Dot Public Schools.

Takeover of Locke High School

With the takeover, Green Dot began management of the entire Locke High School campus. With control of the campus and the students, Green Dot divided the school into eight smaller schools. This structure is called the Locke cluster of schools. All of the former LAUSD students were put into two schools called the LLCA, or Locke Launch to College Academy. In its first year, the LLCA contained 10th, 11th, and 12th-grade students. All 9th-graders were sent to one of the five new incubator schools. As each year progressed and the students moved up, the school would lose a grade until it no longer existed. In its second year, the LLCA would have 11th and 12th grades. And in 2011, its final year, it only had 12th-graders. While the LLCA diminished, the new students moving into Locke as 9th-graders were moved into the five incubator schools. These schools began with only 9th-grade students their first year. After each completed year, these incubator schools grew a grade as the students moved up. In their second

year, the incubator schools had 9th and 10th grades, and in their third year, 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. While the incubator schools were growing, the LLCA was dwindling out of existence. The LLCA is no longer in existence, as the school finished its last year with only 12th graders in 2011. The last school, Advanced Pathways, was not an incubator school, but a school where credit-deficient students in grades 10-12 went to make up their classes in order to graduate. The credit-deficient students primarily came from the LLCA, but this cohort also consisted of students who had missed school due to jail time, chronic absence, and any other problem that had been preventing them from attaining credits to graduate (Green Dot, 2010). Green Dot hoped that its plan for Locke, including the breakup of the school into eight small charter schools, would create an institution that would offer students from the neighborhood a good school where students could earn a quality education.

Before Green Dot Public Schools took over Locke, the school was suffering from years of district-mandated change. From a continuously changing administration—three principals in four years and a revolving door of assistant principals—to breaking the school into small learning communities, the school had been in constant upheaval in an attempt to make needed changes. With this tumultuous and violent history of Locke, change was clearly necessary. As the school faced change, it was important that students were given a role in the transformation, whether it were to be a takeover, reconstitution, or closing. It is important to determine whether student voice helped in the implementation of school reform policy at Locke and whether student voice was appropriately solicited and responsibly incorporated into the ongoing discussion of Locke

High School reform. The following section examines a nontraditional data collection

methodology of capturing student voices from students at Locke High School.

Summary

In this chapter, I have explained and discussed the literature regarding important

topics within this study. The literature in this chapter has helped guide the research

design that will be introduced in the next chapter. In Chapter Three, I explain the

methods used to capture the data for this research study. In Chapter Four, I discuss the

data gathered, using the methods outlined in Chapter Three, and then analyze the data in

Chapter Five of this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methodology used to answer the research questions for this study. I further explain the rationale of this methodology and the possible limitations of the study. In this qualitative study, I have examined how 12th-grade students of color viewed the experience of having their large urban high school taken over by a Charter Management Organization. In the study, I have included photo essays created by student participants, their analysis of these photo essays, in-depth interviews, and a focus group.

Research Questions

The following research questions have guided the research study:

1. What are the perceptions, experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students of color who experienced the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

2. How do five 12th-grade students of color describe the impact on their social, academic, and personal lives during and after the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

The first question in this research study examined the perceptions, experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students of color who had experienced the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools. The second question

examined how these five 12th-grade students of color described the impact the takeover had on their social, academic, and personal lives.

In order to capture these perceptions, experiences, and stories, it was necessary to conduct in-depth interviews with these student participants. In order to prepare these students for the interviews and to provide them with the ability to share concrete evidence of how the takeover affected them, the students created photo essays. These photo essays, which took roughly three weeks to create, helped the students document how the takeover changed the school and affected them personally. They were able to see for themselves, and to show others, concrete evidence of how the school had changed, for better or worse, and how these changes affected them. The photo essays were also used in the interviews to spur questions and prompt storytelling in the form of photo elicitation. In order to share these stories and to give the students an opportunity to discuss these events, a student focus group was held, which included the five students from the photo essay projects and interviews.

Methodology

In this section, the research methodology is briefly introduced and explained to create an overall understanding of the structure of the research. Once the research structure has been explained, analysis and justification for each methodological tool is provided.

Structure of the Research

The research has been separated into three stages. Though these three stages are distinct and separate, they build upon each other. The data found in the first area helped

inform and guide the second section. Likewise, the information found in the first and second sections helped build and guide the third section.

      Photo essays. Student participants created a photo essay. The students were given 10 topics concerning the takeover of Locke High School to help guide the creation of this photo essay. These topics also helped guide the students in the interviews and in the focus group. I was able to help guide the students in the photo essay process and they were given worksheets to help them organize their data and feelings concerning the takeover. Students were given three weeks to create these photo essays. The first week and the beginning of the second week were given to introduce the project, answer student questions, and take photographs. They were able to use the school's cameras during their photography class. Students also had the option of coming before school, during lunch, during their homeroom, and after school to use the cameras, which some of the students took advantage of. The students took as many pictures as they needed, using a digital camera, and then chose a total of 12 pictures, which they then added to the project. These 12 pictures were centered around 10 themes concerning the takeover. Having discussed the takeover with the students on numerous occasions, I chose these 10 themes from these conversations. Once the students had their pictures, they were led to the second step of the photo essay, which was the creation of the physical photo essay. The students then created the photo essay digitally. In order to work on the photo essays, students had access to the school's computer lab during class. They were given a digital template to help guide them to where they should place their pictures, how they should format their writing, and the order in which the topics would be placed. Once finished with the

computer part of the photo essay, students printed the photo essays on white card stock, printed the pictures on a color printer, and then turned them in. This work concluded the first part of the research collection.

In-depth semistructured interviews. The second stage of the research collection was conducting in-depth interviews. Each student-participant took part in three individual in-depth interviews; there were five participants and each participant was interviewed three times each, for a total of 15 interviews. These 15 interviews were each roughly one hour in duration. The interviews were semistructured and were conducted by me, the researcher. I had a set of questions in front of me and used these questions to guide the interview. The hope was to generate a conversation in which students would have the freedom to share their perceptions, experiences, and stories of the takeover and how it had affected him or her in the areas outlined in the questions: academic, social, and personal. The photo essay was also used during the interview process to help elicit stories and answers to questions. These interviews took place at a time of convenience for the student. These interviews took place during their photography class, after school, during a homeroom period, and at times when the student had a gap in his or her schedule.

Focus group. The third stage of the research collection was a focus group. The five students who participated in the photo essays and the interviews also participated in a focus group. These five students were gathered together to discuss their experiences, share elements of their photo essays, and communicate their stories. Although it provided a great opportunity to gather research, this stage also gave the students a chance

to discuss their feelings and experiences concerning the takeover together. Many of the students had not had the opportunity to discuss these topics in a school setting. It was important to give students the opportunity to discuss the changes resulting from such a takeover and to talk about the changes they were going through as seniors moving beyond high school. As with any change, time needs to be given to grieve the changing process (Bridges, 2003). Students were not given this grieving time for the change from old Locke, under Los Angeles Unified School District, to new Locke, under Green Dot Public Schools. This focus group gave the students a forum and the opportunity to grieve about these changes together, even though it had been three years since the takeover.

Justification and Analysis

This next section gives justifications and analysis of the data collecting methods for this research study.

Photo Essays

The photo essay is not a traditional method of data collection. According to Duncan (2002), critical research should attempt to find and use nontraditional methods of data collection in order to elicit stories from oppressed people of color. The photo essay format gave students an opportunity to create and share their story in a way that was comfortable for them.

The photo essay was also a good addition to the research methodology because it gave concrete evidence to qualitative data. One of the criticisms of Critical Race Methodology is its lack of concrete data. The pictures the students took helped ground the research and gave concrete, tangible evidence to the stories they were sharing.

In-Depth Semistructured Interviews

In order to capture the voice of the student, I used semistructured interviews, which helped investigate student perceptions of how the takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools affected them. Semistructured interviews were valuable in this setting—as opposed to scripted interviews—because semistructured interviews are conversation-based, which lends the interview a relaxed and sincere atmosphere. In contrast, structured interviews tend to guide the conversation on a rigid course with little freedom to diverge onto other topics. In order to create a space in which the student voice could be fully expressed, students needed to be able to comfortably discuss the topics and ideas that they felt were important to them concerning the takeover. Weller (1998) has written, "open-ended, semi-structured formats facilitate the collection of new information, providing the flexibility to explore different topics in-depth with different informants" (p. 373). Students needed to have a distinct, personal quality to the interview rather than the traditional rote question-answer format. The semistructured interviews gave me, the interviewer, and the students, the interviewees, the ability to discuss the necessary questions while retaining the quality of a personal, teacher-to-student conversation.

In support of the semistructured interview approach, person-centered interviewing was employed within this study due to:

> oscillations between respondent and informant modes [,which] illuminate the spaces, conflicts, coherences, and transformations, if any, between the [student-in-themselves] (either in [his]/her own conception, or in the interviewer's emerging one) and aspects of [his]/her perception and understanding of her external context. (Levy & Hollan, 1998, p. 336)

This approach translated into complex answers to the questions the students encountered through the interviewing process. Locke students who had attended the school before, during, and after the transformation were asked questions as informants or first-hand participants in the social happenings they had witnessed during this time and described how they were affected by them. Additionally, Locke students were asked different types of questions, which encouraged the interviewee to be self-reflective on the issues previously reported. The interview process with the students offered this research a significant student voice capable of providing stories and counternarratives or counterstories.

Because of the wide array of possible student perceptions, it was important that the content of the questions as well as the form in which the questions were posed allowed for the comfortable flow of conversation and for the analysis of student voice. Some structure was needed in order to facilitate this flow of conversation and to ask the kind of questions that would help answer the research questions. Whereas I had the responsibility of creating a series of interviewing questions most capable of yielding informative responses, students had such a wide range of perceptions of the Locke takeover that the methodology needed to be capacious enough to capture such responses but also structured enough to give the students the necessary organization to feel comfortable and safe in the interviewing space.

In order to capture the data, these interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. These interviews, saved as audio files on a recorder, were transferred to a computer and then transcribed and coded in the six areas represented in the research questions:

perceptions, experiences, and stories of the takeover, and the social, academic, and personal impact of the takeover.

Focus Group

According to Silverman (2006), focus groups are "group discussions usually based on visual or verbal stimuli provided by a researcher" (p. 401). This focus group consisted of the five student participants who had produced the photo essays and had been involved in the interviews. The purpose of the focus group was to put the students in an environment where they felt more comfortable to express their feelings concerning their experiences with the takeover. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) have found that "interactions among the participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually" (p. 308).

Another benefit of a focus group is the *focus* it puts on the group. With this method, interviewers "ask questions to initiate discussion, but then allow participants to take major responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the views of others in the group" (Gall et al., 1996, p. 308). Students had the opportunity to lead, share, and participate in this focus group. While I acted as a moderator and initiated questions and discussion, the students took the lead in the conversations. From the beginning of the focus group, they discussed and validated one another's feelings, perceptions, and experiences.

Another purpose of the focus group was to allow the participating students the opportunity to discuss their feelings with peers. It was important that the participants benefited from their work in the study; the focus group gave them the opportunity to

discuss their feelings concerning this mammoth change. The Locke takeover was a major

transition and many of the students were not given the proper time and space to grieve the

past and to accept the change, which is necessary for such large transitions (Bridges,

2003).

Data from the focus group was recorded on a digital recorder. This group

conversation, saved as an audio file on the recorder, was transferred to a computer and

then transcribed and coded in the six areas within the research questions: perceptions,

experiences, and stories of the takeover, and the social, academic, and personal impact of

the takeover.

Timeline of the Study

The research collection process covered a period of two months. The research

began in February of 2011 and continued through April of the same year. The photo

essays took roughly three weeks to complete. Once the essays were completed, the

interviews took place during the following two weeks. With the first two stages

completed, the last stage, the focus group, occurred during one afternoon meeting with all

of the research participants. During the data collection process, the organization of the

data also occurred; the data was organized into the six coded areas that aligned with the

research questions: perceptions, experiences, and stories of the takeover, and the social,

academic, and personal impact of the takeover. After the data collection and organization

had occurred, the analyzing of data and conclusion of this research was accomplished.

Data Preparation

The data from stage one was created by the research participants. These participants created photo essays using a digital format, which they gave to me. The research participants also created and received hard copies that they were able to keep for themselves once the research was completed. These hard copies were also used during the interview process to help elicit responses. The data from stages two and three, saved as audio files, were transcribed by me, the researcher, and added to the research. I maintained and stored the data digitally within a computer and an external hard drive.

Data Management

Coding for the research was conducted using six different codes. These six codes were taken from the research questions. They were labeled as perceptions concerning the takeover, experiences concerning the takeover, stories concerning the takeover, descriptions of the impact of the takeover on the student's social life, descriptions of the impact of the takeover on the student's academic life, and descriptions of the impact of the takeover on the student's personal life. These six codes guided the coding and organization of the data. As themes emerged within these coded areas, the coded data was further divided into thematic groups.

Internal Validity

Internal validity is the process of ensuring that the findings in the research are congruent with reality (Merriam, 2002). One of the major methods of ensuring validity in research is through the process of triangulation. According to Silverman (2006), "Triangulation usually refers to combining multiple theories, methods, observers, and

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empirical materials to produce a more accurate, comprehensive and objective of study (p. 291). Gall et al. (1996) have written, "the key to triangulation is to vary in some way the approach used to generate the finding that you are seeking to corroborate" (p. 575). In order to ensure that the research findings in this study were accurate and congruent to reality, I employed three different methods to ensure validity. The research used photo essays, which include physical pictures, concrete evidence, and documents; interviews, which explain the realities that the students experienced; and a focus group, which allowed the students to share their stories and validate their own experiences within the study.

I served as another form of internal validity. Though I may not be able to validate all stories, having experienced the takeover with the students, I had a similar understanding of their positions and opinions. I also experienced some of the events they shared and had an understanding of the school and atmosphere they discussed. My participation as a form of internal validity could be seen negatively if I allowed my voice to distract or detract from the voices of the students. For this reason, it was important for me to remain on the periphery and to allow the students and their voices to take center stage.

Credibility in a research study can be achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I had been engaged with the school for seven years, which allowed me to learn the culture, test for misinformation, and build trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a teacher at the site selected, I was able to observe the school and the participants on a near daily basis. I created

triangulation through the use of multiple research sources, photo essays, interviews, and a focus group.

Site Selection

Locke High School was chosen for three specific reasons:

1. Locke High School had recently experienced a major takeover and transition from being a public high school run by Los Angeles Unified School District, to being managed as a public charter high school run by a Charter Management Organization. This unprecedented takeover of a failing, high-needs school gathered much attention from the media, but negligible academic scrutiny. Little had been done to ascertain the opinions and thoughts of the students concerning this takeover.

2. The history, location, and demographics of the school provoked questions concerning the social justice aspects of the undertaking and how it affected students in a high-needs school. Locke also promoted discussion concerning social justice in education and how the charter school movement affected students of color.

3. I was a teacher at the school; I was able to create relations with students that aided in the collection of data. With an emic position within the school, I was able to navigate the school and Green Dot, and was comfortable in such a setting.

Participant Selection

Seventy students were given the opportunity to participate in the research. These 70 students came from the three photography classes I taught at Locke High School. Of those 70 introduced to the research project, I then asked for volunteers. If there were more than five volunteers, they were chosen by fulfilling the criteria, their ability to finish

the project, and then their convenience in meeting. The five students who were selected for this project had to meet the following criteria:

1. Had been a student all four years at Locke High School; had experienced Locke under LAUSD, the takeover, and Locke under Green Dot.

2. Be able to turn in a quality assignment by the due date.

3. Meet with the researcher during the photo creation process.

4. Use the equipment only during appropriate times.

5. Agree to complete the whole research project including interviews and focus group.

These criteria were necessary to ensuring that the research would be able to capture the perceptions, experiences, and stories as outlined in the research questions. For example, in order to document the impact of the takeover, students needed to have an understanding of the school before the takeover, thus the need for the first requirement. Requirements two through five were intended to ensure that the participants were willing and able to participate in the full research project. Had more than five volunteers met the requirements, I would have chosen the five based upon the quality of the assignment turned in. Of the students who volunteered and fulfilled all criteria, only five turned their project in during the allotted time period. These five students were de facto chosen based on their ability to turn the project in on time and to fulfill all other requirements.

Background of Researcher

This section discusses my background and ethnicity as the researcher. It is important to be clear and transparent in these areas because of the possible biases and perceptions that I may bring to the collection, coding, and analysis of the data. It is

especially important to discuss this information considering that this research uses Critical Race Theory as its theoretical framework.

I am a 30-year-old White male. I was raised in the suburban Seattle area in a two-parent household. I came to the Los Angeles area to teach through the organization Teach for America and have remained at the school for five years past my initial two-year commitment. I am happily married and have one child.

I have been a teacher at Locke High School from 2004 to the present. In my seventh year of teaching, I taught senior English and Introduction to Photography. I taught all grades at Locke high school, 9-12. I also taught a range of classes, from remedial English for 9th-graders to honors English for 12th-graders, and many courses between. In addition to English classes and photography, I was a teacher for the AVID program (Advancement via Individual Determination) for three years, homeroom classes for three years, and CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) courses for two years. I also volunteered with the cross country and track teams throughout my years at Locke.

To clarify my level of participation within the study, it is important to note that I did not live within the Watts community where I spent my workdays, Monday through Friday. I was a part of the takeover, helping to guide students before, during, and after the takeover. I often sought out and was sought out to share opportunities to enjoy relationships formed at Locke during special community events held in the Watts neighborhood including quinceaneras, birthday parties, and graduation events for past and present student families. I was able to maintain professional, but personal, relationships with students present and past. This depth of community involvement

created a level of enculturation on my part, that in turn enhanced my ability to understand and interpret subtle, tacit aspects of culture such as the quality education that many Watts families desired. While I was a moderate participant in the community, my participation made me an active participant at the school site and in this research project (Dewalt & Dewalt, 1998, p. 261).

It would have been a great error in the research to focus on the race and position of the students while overlooking the race and possible positions of bias that I represented. According to McIntosh (1990), in order to "redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions" (p. 35). As a White researcher using Critical Race Theory, I needed to acknowledge race and ways that I might interpret and analyze the data. McIntosh (1990) continued, "[…] whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow 'them' to be more like 'us'" (p. 31). With this understanding, it was important to acknowledge possible biases due to my upbringing, culture, and race.

Critical Race Theory Concerns

It is important to note the following areas of concern and possible growth for CRT in educational discourse: my position as researcher, use of appropriate descriptors of students and schools, and the reliability of student voice. With my experiences as a seven-year veteran teacher in South Los Angeles schools contrasted to my upbringing in a quiet suburb of Seattle in a two-parent household, I needed to take full responsibility for the intertwining of race and culture present when attempting to collect and publish

student voices of color. In order to bring attention and eventual change to the plight of students in high-needs school takeovers, one must be willing to work toward a more just educational system within racially diverse communities and high schools, such as Locke High School (Bergerson, 2003).

Looking first at the issue of me, as the researcher, it was important to remember "that counter-stories must be told from the perspective of the oppressed person or group" and not from my own position as an educated White male teacher. This position is important in order to eliminate the further othering of students and their voices, should I co-opt my voice and their voice altogether (Bergerson, 2003). This balance between my voice and the students' voice is understood as the *positionality* of the researcher and must continually be noted and limited in order to ensure that I am not speaking for others (Parker & Lynn, 2002). In this research, I was the publisher of student voices about Locke's takeover and not the usurper of them. Bergerson has argued that it is, however, the role of White scholars who are writing in race conscious ways to use CRT strategically as it is a framework developed by scholars of color to theorize on their experiences of race and equality. Bergerson continued by positing that it is also the role of White race conscious scholars to insist on the legitimacy of using CRT in the study of education, citing CRT scholars as often as possible. She has been quick to defend suspicions, explaining that, "I do not intend to say that white voices are necessary to legitimize critical race scholarship, but to emphasize the importance of incorporating CRT's tenets into our work to show that norms and assumptions about racism are changing" (Bergerson, 2003, p. 60). Of additional note, however, some authors of CRT

have noted that the Whiteness of faculty, staff, and researchers themselves can yield further reflective discourse about respondent subjectivity, complexities of Whiteness in high-needs schools of color, as well as insight into how the meaning of Whiteness can change practices in education when both student and teacher employ reflexive thinking.

The second examined area of concern and possible CRT growth lies within the use of appropriate descriptors for high needs students and schools. More specifically, this area of concern and growth calls attention to the (mis)use of the term *urban* when describing high needs schools. Duncan has called attention to "contemporary times, [in which] concepts like inner-city and urban reiterate the savage, primitive, and barbaric in the present and their applications to certain schools and students are indicative of the allochronism that informs US public education" (Duncan, 2002, p. 98). He added that "urban" is no longer necessarily a geographic descriptor, but rather a customary characterization by policymakers referencing the dismal state and physical space of education for students of color. For the purpose of this study and also for the sake of furthering the inclusion of CRT within the field of education, I employed the term *high-needs* to address the obvious high needs present in the academic lives of secondary students at Locke High School.

The third area of concern and growth rests within the reliability and use of student voice. Farber and Sherry's work (1995) noted that critical race theorists' emphasis on storytelling has drawn question and criticism. They wrote that a focus on the voices of people of color has motivated some to say that "CRT has failed to meet the burden of proof of the existence of fundamental cognitive differences between subjugated and

dominant voices that would warrant privileging the former over the latter in the research enterprise" (Duncan, 2002, p. 103). When examining the experiences of Locke High School students and community members, one can see by the very absence of documentation that these voices have not been afforded a respectable platform upon which to claim their rightful places as important and valued stakeholders.

There are other difficulties in terms of respondent reliability, such as the interviewing process and specifically the probing of responses. A researcher must be wary of setting an intent to discover one particular aspect of the respondent's narrative. According to Parker and Lynn (2002), a researcher should be cautious of "expecting too much from narratives in terms of interviewer expectations for critical perspectives and insights" (p. 14), which is why it is important to use some form of structured interview to keep interview going in directions that relate to the research. This research used semistructured interviews for this purpose, using the students' photo essays to anchor the discussions.

Given the areas of concern as well as the future areas of CRT application within the field of educational research, scholarship must continue to uphold an attitude of multiple consciousness; an attitude that focuses not on randomness but on specificities in the lived experience of students who endure educational inequity each day. As Duncan has explained:

> Mari Matsuda (1996) proposes as a method of inquiry into social reality that includes a *deliberate* choice to see the world from the point of view of socially subjugated groups. An invitation of this sort does not entail excluding other points of view. In fact, such an invitation is predicated upon a careful consideration of other, especially dominant explanations for social problems, and finding them wanting; the proof of the inadequacy of

the latter viewpoints, it may be argued, is in the enduring presence of oppression in society and the inability of these latter points of view to lead to lasting measures of relief. (Duncan, 2002, p. 106)

This research and dissertation was guided by a multiple consciousness approach to the work of documenting and publishing student voices regarding the Locke High School takeover. I, as a White male, raised within the dominant society, attempted to help explain social problems in conjunction with and using the voices of oppressed students. Once again, I wanted to use the voices of the students to describe the takeover project and the impact it had on them.

Summary

This chapter has outlined and explained the research outline for this research study. This chapter also discussed my positionality as the researcher. The data collected by conducting the research, as outlined in this chapter, is presented in Chapter Four and then analyzed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I introduced the research, relevant literature, and methodology for the research. This chapter organizes and presents the data from this research study of the takeover of a high-needs high school. The data are taken from the interviews, photo essays, and the focus group.

This chapter is organized to answer the following research questions from chapter one:

1. What are the perceptions, experiences, and stories of five 12th-grade students of color who experienced the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

2. How do five 12th-grade students of color describe the impact on their social, academic, and personal lives during and after the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

In order to answer the questions in accordance with the theoretical framework used, Critical Race Theory, the research focuses on the stories of the students. Because Critical Race Theory relies heavily on the experiences and stories of persons of color, the voices of the research participants will drive the conversations and organization of this chapter. I have organized these voices in order to best display their opinions, experiences, stories, thoughts, feelings, conversations, and photographs. The photographs within this section were taken by the students as part of the photo essays they created.

The data are organized into six different areas. These six areas emerge out of the research questions. The six areas in Chapter Four include experiences, perceptions, stories, social impact of the takeover, academic impact of the takeover, and personal impact of the takeover. These six areas have been further divided into three areas, which are old Locke, the takeover, and new Locke. Old Locke, Locke High School under LAUSD, and new Locke, Locke High School under Green Dot Public Schools, are the two distinct time periods in which the students attended Locke High School. The third area, the takeover, discusses the transition between the two time periods and the ongoing changes. Because the changes were not instantaneous, the time period for the takeover overlaps with the time period of the new Locke. From there, any major themes found in those areas will be further broken down and discussed.

Though the research questions do not explicitly ask questions concerning old Locke, an understanding of old Locke is necessary to understanding the transition and changes that occurred during the takeover. In order to determine how these changes affected the students, we must know what the school went from and what it became.

Student Participants

The research study included five student participants. Each of these students was or had been a photography student within my photography class. There were three females within the study and two males. Four of the participants were Latina/o and one labeled herself as Black, but not African American. Though the study could have benefited from having African American students, none who volunteered met the qualifications. Many of the African American students who were interested in

participating in the study did not meet all of the requirements for the study because they had not attended the school for all four years. Of the two African Americans who said they were interested in participating in the study, neither turned in his essay before the deadline and the beginning of stage two of the research. Although this study was limited to students of color in general, further study of whether the takeover affected students of different races in different ways would be beneficial.

The following section will further describe each of the five students involved in the research. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the five students.

Melissa

Melissa was a quiet 17-year-old female who always drew little hearts next to her name. Her family was of Latino descent, having originated from Jalisco, Mexico. Melissa had lived in South Central Los Angeles all of her life; her family had lived in the Watts and South Los Angeles area for three generations. At the time of this research, Melissa was living with her mom and two sisters, though that permutation changed often as her sisters constantly came and went. She felt that her family was very supportive, but said that, "my family's strength has fallen, therefore, things began to fall apart" (Melissa biography). The only person who worked in her family was her mom, who worked for a food company.

Melissa was a bright student with good grades and planned to go to college the following year. She described herself as "a dedicated student who cares about school, at least more than others, and smart with good grades" (Melissa interview 1). When asked how she would describe herself as a person, she answered "responsible, dedicated, and

strong" (Melissa interview 1). She also wrote, "I see myself as a person that is driven by inspiration. I know what I want from life and steps to get me there. However, I feel I have defects. My struggles have made me who I am" (Melissa biography). She described her experiences at school as being okay. She wrote, "It has been more stressful than other people I know" (Melissa biography).

Jamilet

Jamilet was a friendly and thoughtful 19-year-old female of Latino descent. Her family originated in Mexico. She explained that her great grandfather had participated in the Mexican Revolution alongside Emiliano Zapata. Her family had lived in South Central Los Angeles for 27 years. Jamilet's father came to Los Angeles in 1984 after tiring of the corruption in his military position; his earnings kept being taken away from him. There were five people in Jamilet's family; she was the youngest. She was the only one in the family with plans to attend college. In describing her family, Jamilet wrote, "[E]ven though they don't have an education, they are always there to support me with school stuff" (Jamilet biography). She lived with her mother, father, and brother. Her mother and brother worked though her dad was currently unemployed.

Jamilet had good grades and planned to go to college. She was very thoughtful when it came to others and to her schoolwork. She discussed a learning disability that she had had in middle school and how it had affected her ability to learn. In describing herself as a student, she said, "I'm curious about everything. I feel that school's really important. It helps you as a human. You think you know something, but then you learn another way. It helps see both sides of the story. You learn about yourself" (Jamilet

interview 1). She described herself as a "positive person; I try to see the positive side of things. I don't give up" (Jamilet interview 1).

Shawna

Shawna was a considerate and kindhearted 17-year-old female. Shawna and her family were of Belizean descent. Her great grandfather was British and Caucasian and her great grandmother was a freed slave (Shawna biography). Shawna and her family had arrived to South Central Los Angeles from Belize in 2004; she had lived in the area for seven years. She said that she related more with African Americans because of the slave trade and because of her skin color (Shawna interview 1). She lived with her mother, step-father, and her step-father's family. Shawna felt that her family was very isolated, spread out, and not really close.

Shawna was a smart student who had decent grades and was attempting to go to college the next year. She was interested in studying abroad and finding ways that she could help other people. She wrote, "I would always think of others instead of myself. I believe in helping others before helping myself because it makes me happy" (Shawna biography). Shawna told me that her "grades are okay, I have A's, B's, and C's. I have good grades this year, but I haven't been having good memorable moments" (Shawna interview 1). When asked to describe herself, Shawna said, "smart, optimistic and nice. I care about people. I try, and don't give up. I like to help others when they are in need" (Shawna interview 1).

Daniel

Daniel was an intelligent 18-year old male who described himself as a nerd. Daniel was of Latino descent, his family having originated in Guatemala. They came to the United States 20 to 30 years ago and never left (Daniel biography). Daniel had always lived in South Central Los Angeles. He wrote, "My mom always searched for the right home to live in, but I guess we never found it which is why we ended up staying where we live now" (Daniel biography). He lived with his mother, father, sister, and brother. He described his family as loving and supportive.

Daniel had great grades and hoped to attend college the next year. He was still in the planning stage, as he had not been accepted to any universities yet. When asked to describe himself as a person, he wrote, "in my opinion absolutely nothing interesting about me in any way. If there was anything interesting I think I would know who I am" (Daniel biography). As a student, Daniel said that he was "calm" and that he "enjoys technology" (Daniel interview 1). Describing himself, Daniel told me that, "he tries to do his best, even if it's not the best" (Daniel interview 1).

Chris

Chris was a wiry and energetic 17-year-old male. He was of Latino descent, his family having originated in Guerrero, Mexico. Chris's grandmother came to the United States and his family had been in the Los Angeles area since that time. Chris had spent his whole life in South Central Los Angeles. He lived with his mother, father, two sisters, and one brother. His family was supportive, but they didn't take "a huge role in [his] education because anything is better than what they received" (Chris biography).

Chris was a good student, had good grades, and was planning on attending college the next year. Chris described himself as "a student that can be pushed and is capable of many things. I am a person very capable and determined once I set my mind to it. I am motivated to strive to get an education and do the best I can do with it" (Chris interview 1). Though he said, "I can get anything done as a student," he also stated that, "as a senior, I get lazy and lethargic" (Chris interview 1).

Chris had become critical about the quality of education he was receiving and about his position in life. He was a critical thinker who belonged to an organization that he referred to as the council. It was sponsored by UCLA and helped students look at their schools and neighborhoods from a critical point of view. He had helped conduct research with this organization and had recently travelled to New Orleans, Louisiana to present his findings at the AERA (American Educational Research Association) conference.

Locke

The setting for this research study was Locke High School (Figure 1). Locke High School was taken over by Green Dot in the July of 2008. Locke opened its doors as a charter school for the first time in September of 2008. When students described Locke, they broke it into two time periods. The students referred to the time they had spent under LAUSD as old Locke. They named the time spent under Green Dot as new Locke. These descriptors will be used in order to differentiate between the two time periods. The following section will describe old and new Locke using the words of the students. This

section will only briefly describe the two schools, as the rest of the chapter will examine

old Locke, new Locke, and the takeover.

Figure 1. Looking at the front of the school.

Shawna photo essay

Old Locke

When the students described old Locke, they usually discussed the chaos, lack of

organization, and horrible teaching that was going on during that time. During the focus

group, the students were asked to describe the old Locke as a group. They immediately

began discussing how difficult the school was for them:

> Chris: It was a chaotic place.
>
> Melissa: It was terrible.
>
> Chris: I don't think it was terrible.
>
> Shawna: I don't think it was terrible.
>
> Chris: There were just a lot of things going on at once.
>
> Jamilet: I think it was unorganized.
>
> Melissa: You shouldn't have fires in your high school. You shouldn't
>   have the police running up and down like it was a movie. You
>   shouldn't have that in your high school.
>
> Jamilet: Or messed up schedules.
>
> Daniel: Or something going on every ten minutes.
>
> Chris: I think it's the way the school was organized. If you treat the
>   students a certain way, they're going to act a certain way.
>
> Melissa: Nobody tells you to go set a trash can on fire.
>
> Jamilet: Or a hallway.
>
> Daniel: Or the library.
>
> Melissa: But other students don't do that. I never set a trash can on fire
>   and we got the same education. (Focus group)

Old Locke was a difficult place for students to succeed. All of the students agreed

that it was not a great school and was in great need of change. There were elements of

the school that the students enjoyed, but they knew they were not receiving an equitable

education.   As the students continued to discuss the old Locke, they described difficult

memories and how challenging it was to learn:

> Shawna: The only bad memory of old Locke was the riot. I saw this boy
> with his head busted open. It was too much for me. I was
> crying. I was looking for my brother.
>
> Jamilet: My bad memory was having bad classes with teachers that didn't
> want to be there.
>
> Daniel: Yeah, teachers were lazy.
>
> Jamilet: Yeah, teachers were lazy. They just didn't care.
>
> Melissa: I feel a lot of them didn't have the experience. They wanted to
> teach, but didn't have the experience.
>
> Chris: In 9th grade, we had a lot of teachers who just got tired of kids not
> paying attention to them.
>
> Melissa: It was like a bad relationship between teachers and students.
>
> Shawna: I had some good relationships with my teachers. I would talk to
> them and they would see the difference between me and other
> students who didn't want to learn.
>
> Melissa: I heard stories of students who would mess up teachers' cars.
>
> Daniel: A lot of the teachers that I liked got fired when Green Dot came
> in. (Focus group)

The school was not conducive to learning. It did not provide the students with

effective teachers, a positive academic atmosphere, or the resources they needed in order

to succeed. In her interview, Jamilet described the school, explaining:

> Old Locke was chaotic. It was a bit chaotic because, I don't consider that
> I had a lot of good teachers. Some of my teachers wouldn't even teach,
> they'd just give you book work. I can't learn like that. Also, I didn't feel
> that it was challenging and I didn't see that care. Of course there were a
> couple cared, the ones who stayed at Locke, like Mr. Avila, he helped me
> a lot. It was really crowded compared to now, and there were fights a

couple of times a week. There was just constant fighting. It had a really
bad reputation. For example, the riot, it was a big thing, I remember, I
was there. But, the media exaggerated it. (Jamilet interview 1)

Old Locke had little to offer the students educationally. The school also had little to offer

in terms of safety and organization. Shawna described feeling that the school was not run

by faculty and rules, but by students and chaos. She explained:

Under old Locke, it seemed like the students took over the school. They
would always walk around the hallways, during class, always walking on
Saint Street doing nothing. They burned down the library. They burned
down the football snack room. They had fights all the time. I really didn't
feel safe coming to the school. Teachers cared, but they didn't know how
to show it. (Shawna interview 1)

Old Locke, as described by the students, was a difficult school to attend. It

offered the students very little of what they needed from a school. After reading their

descriptions of the school, there is no question that the school needed a major overhaul

and that changes needed to happen quickly. About this need for change, Jamilet said, "I

felt like the school needed improvement and needed some attention from LAUSD. It

needed to be cleaned out. Not the people, but discipline" (Jamilet interview 1). Locke

would not receive that attention and change from LAUSD, but was reopened as a charter

school under Green Dot. As a reopened charter school, Locke was referred to by the

students as new Locke.

New Locke

New Locke, as the students referred to it, was Locke High School under the

management of Green Dot Public Schools. It was different from old Locke, as there were

many more structures and rules. The students in this study spent three years under new

Locke and had many differing opinions about the quality of the school. Despite the

differences, all of the students agreed that new Locke lacked the chaos and organizational

nightmare that was old Locke. At new Locke, school days were calmer, fights were

infrequent, and the school environment was conducive to learning. Whereas new Locke

was an improvement to old Locke, it was not the improvement that the students had

hoped for or deserved (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Banners at new Locke.

Daniel photo essay

When asked to describe new Locke, the students differed in opinions. It began in this

way:

> Chris: It's just organized with more security. They painted the wall and
> let someone donate trees to us. It's not much different. Same
> books. Same tables. Same gates around the school. Same
> environment. It still feels like a prison.

Daniel: It's how it seemed 10th grade year.

Jamilet: I think the new Locke was a good change. It seems like teachers
they care now.

Melissa: I think that it improved. (Focus group)

Students were quick to point out the similarities between old Locke and new

Locke; however, others noted that it had changed for the better. When describing the

new Locke, the students were quick to point out that the changes were limited in scope

and duration. The students felt that it was better, but not what they expected. Chris and

Melissa discussed this limited scope of change.

Chris: Do you think it kept improving?

Melissa: I think there were little improvements and then it stopped and
that's it. (Focus group)

When discussing new Locke, the students were quick to point out the visible changes that

had occurred. The most visible changes that had occurred dealt with the eating area,

nicknamed "the quad" (Figure 3), and the presence of a hired security company. Jamilet

explained, "It looks cleaner and nice. It looks professional. It looks like a place where

you could sit and read a book, not that I know any students that would . . . They made it

look nicer. They put in trees" (Jamilet interview 1). Daniel and Jamilet discussed the

safety of the school and the security company that runs it (Figure 4). Jamilet explained,

"CRST made things safer. They are in school and they also roam around the

neighborhood" (Jamilet interview 1) and Daniel stated, "CRST keeps it well secured 24-

7" (Daniel interview 1).

Figure 3. Looking across the quad at the school.

Melissa photo essay

Figure 4. CRST officer.

Melissa photo essay

<center>**Conclusion**</center>

As the students described the two Lockes, they pointed out many of the similarities and differences between the two. There were definite advantages and disadvantages to both of the schools. The new school was cleaner and safer, whereas the old school offered the students more social advantages. This chapter will continue to describe the two schools and the feelings the students have concerning them.

<center>**Experiences**</center>

This section discusses the experiences that these students had at Locke during their four years there. For this study, an experience is defined as, "something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through" (Merriam-Webster, 2011, para. 1). Experiences are events in which the students have participated, or in which the students were directly affected. The experiences section is different from the stories section in that stories will be defined as events in which the students did not participate or by which they were not directly affected. The experiences in this section are broken up into three smaller sections, old Locke, the takeover, and new Locke.

Old Locke

The experiences of the students under old Locke ranged from exciting and fun to scary and disturbing. These experiences shaped some of the perceptions that we will look at later in the chapter. When asked to describe an event from 9th grade, all of the students chose to talk about the riot that rocked the school on Friday, May 9, 2008.

Riot. The one experience under old Locke that all five students shared and discussed with me was the riot that rocked the school. The police reported that the race

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riot involved 600 students (Blume & Landsberg, 2008, para. 1). Though students agreed

that the media blew the event out of proportion (Jamilet interview 3, Chris interview 3)

and that it was not even a race riot (Chris interview 3), it was a violent and impactful

event that all five students remembered and were able to describe. Melissa described it in

this way:

> I was like, what's going on? I was scared. I thought something was going
> to happen to me. It was like chaos. It was like not even real. I was on
> Saint Street and it was all by the handball courts and people were running
> up and down. I was like scared. Then I saw one of my friends and he
> walked me to the gate where the bungalows are at. That area had been
> closed, but they let me go in. I was like, What about everybody else I
> know, are they okay? It made me feel like I don't want to come to school
> at all. You never knew if you were going to be safe or discriminated
> against. It was just scary to come to school. People already knew it was
> going to happen. I remember a guy saying everybody was going to get
> down. I didn't think it was going to be that big. It was like a movie, being
> escorted out of your class and the police were running down in a file. It
> made me feel like, we're in the news, not for something good, but for
> something bad. (Melissa interview 3)

The above quotation explains quite well what happened with the riot and goes on to

describe the atmosphere of the school during that time. It was not a spontaneous action

but a planned event. Although students may not have understood the magnitude of the

riot's impact, they knew the event was going to happen. Chris explained, "[I]t was dumb

stuff, like kids saying, let's start a riot. They just got ignorant and started hitting people.

Everybody ran out and it wasn't that big" (Chris interview 3). While some of the

students prefered to downplay the severity of it, "In ninth grade, there was the big riot.

Lots of fighting. Lots of bleeding. And a lot of cops. That's it" (Daniel interview 1), it

was a scary event for many (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5. The handball courts.

Chris photo essay

Figure 6. Looking down Saint street.

Shawna photo essay

Jamilet explained:

> I had a class in the bungalows, in the middle of campus. I remember it
> was during passing period, I was coming back from lunch, and I saw a
> huge group of people fighting. At first I didn't know what it was, but
> when I saw people running away from other people, I got the picture it
> was a riot. I just left and went to class and the whole school was in
> lockdown and certain people got arrested. Policemen were pepper
> spraying students. It wasn't funny, but it was a bit weird, my English
> teacher almost got pepper sprayed while she was trying to break up
> students. Seeing that made me a little bit scared. I didn't know what was
> going to happen after that. It wasn't like a long fight that lasted thirty
> minutes or something; it was more like a five minute thing then it was
> back to normal. It wasn't that bad. (Jamilet interview 1)

Many of the students were concerned about their friends, brothers, or sisters at the school.

Shawna went out in the riot to look for her brother, "I was in the riot looking for my

brother. His girlfriend saw me looking for him and she told him. He came out of

nowhere, grabbed me, and dragged me inside" (Shawna interview 3). Although the riot

itself was scary, it was just as scary for some of the students when they emptied the

school and sent them out into the neighborhood. Jamilet explained:

> I remember that day they sent us out early. I had to walk home that day.
> They didn't want nobody even in front of the school. It made me feel like
> a criminal; I'm not even tall or something. I didn't feel safe. Me walking
> out to the community isn't that safe. It wasn't fair because even if there
> were a few hundred people were involved, there were more students who
> weren't involved. (Jamilet interview 3)

It is no wonder that all of the students chose to discuss the riot as an experience they had

under old Locke. It was a major event that affected all of the students at the school. This

event was etched in the minds of these students and helped shape the public's image of

Locke High School.

Takeover

During the interviews, students were asked what experiences they had had during the takeover and how they had participated. Students explained that they had had no participation, no voice, and no part in the takeover. Although the students had not had experiences participating in the takeover, I have included this section because they were experiences that the students could have had and would have liked to have had (Focus group, page 4).

Role. In interview three, I asked the students what role they had had in the takeover. Jamilet explained, "I didn't participate in the takeover of Locke at all" (Jamilet interview). They all had similar responses, Daniel said, "I didn't have a role in the takeover," (Daniel interview 3), and Melissa said, "I didn't take part in the takeover" (Melissa interview 3).

Although the students did not feel that they had participated in the takeover, they would have liked to have been a part of it. In the focus group, Daniel commented on this topic and Jamilet responded,

> Daniel: They should have at least asked for advice.
>
> Jamilet: They should have asked a group of students. They should have let us choose our uniforms and colors. Like a democracy. (Focus group)

This criticism of the takeover was a significant one for students; they had had no role in the changes that would happen at the school. They had not had the opportunity to become active participants in shaping their education.

Voice. Similar to feelings about the role they had lacked in the takeover, students felt that they had not had a voice. During interview 3, I asked the students what voice

they had had in the takeover and if they had had a forum to voice their concerns or to discuss their opinions concerning the takeover. All of the students responded that they had had no voice in the takeover. The following are the students' comments concerning this lack of voice they had had in the takeover:

> I didn't have much of a voice with the takeover. I remember they just sent a letter telling the uniform we were going to wear. That was it, no questions. It would have been nice if they would have let us choose our uniforms. (Jamilet interview 3)

> I didn't have a voice in the takeover. Students don't have a voice in anything. We really don't have a voice in here. (Chris interview 3)

> I don't think anyone had a voice in the takeover. It's one thing to force people to do something and it's another to ask. They didn't give us any choices on what we wanted. (Daniel interview 3)

> I didn't really say anything about the takeover. They never asked my opinion. (Shawna interview 3)

While student discussion and voice could have benefited both students and the school, their voice was lacking in the takeover.

Choices. During the same interview, interview 3, the students were asked what choices they were given when it came to the takeover. Once again, they felt they had had little choice in the takeover. Their choice was to continue to attend Locke under Green Dot, with the accompanying rules and structure, or to attend another school. Below are the student responses concerning the choices they had had in the takeover:

> I didn't have any choice. People were just assigned to classes and they didn't have any options. (Jamilet interview 3)

> I had the choice to leave and let everything pass me by. As a 9th grader, I didn't know if it was going to be good or bad. That's the only choice I had. (Chris interview 3)

We really didn't have a choice. It was either, there is going to be a change and you're going to stay here, or just leave. Either you stay and you get used to change or you leave and go to another school. (Daniel interview 3)

I chose to stay. Me and my friends, we grew to see how Locke turned out. (Shawna interview 3)

The takeover was a passive event for the students. They had not experienced the takeover as active participants. When asked about their role, voice, and choice in the takeover, they unanimously responded that they had had no part.

Describing their experience at Locke. When asked to describe their experience at Locke in one sentence, many of the responses discussed this idea of passivity while the school changed, or didn't change, around them. They described how their school had changed around them and they had had no control over it. In describing their four years at Locke, they talked about the difficulties they had encountered, the changes they had endured, and the incompleteness of the takeover.

Daniel: It's been an obstacle and a challenge.

Shawna: I've been changed forcefully.

Jamilet: We were stuck in a transition that Locke has turned into but we were just stuck in there: we couldn't completely change.

Melissa: I think it's going from bad to a trial.

Chris: It's like we've been stuck in this dark room. We saw a little hole of light, but the room is still dark. So we see this little light and they give us a peephole. It doesn't mean there's light in the room or that we're out of the room we just have a peephole. (Focus group)

Even though they were asked to describe their experience at Locke, each of them spoke of their experience in terms of Green Dot. During the time of the takeover,

they were acted upon by an outside factor instead of being the main agent of change and choice during their time at Locke.

New Locke

The experiences of the students varied under new Locke. In order to organize the responses from the students in this section, I have structured them by school year. Under new Locke, the students spent 10th, 11th, and 12th grades with Green Dot and their experiences have been placed in those respective sections.

10th grade. Concerning 10th grade, the topics the students discussed followed three major themes: separation and isolation, similarities to 9th grade, and feeling like a trial year for Green Dot.

Isolation and separation. One of the major themes of the students' 10th-grade year is separation and isolation. This theme will be briefly discussed in this section and then continued later under the section on social effects.

When the students returned to school under Green Dot in 10th grade, they were divided into two small schools with different teachers, lunches, uniforms, assistant principals, school entrances, and policies. The students felt that they had been arbitrarily separated from one another and did not understand the reasons for this separation. Although the students did not understand the reasoning, they did know that they did not like to be separated from their friends. Chris said, "[W]e're used to being separated; it's kind of a school segregation" (Chris interview 3). Shawna also commented, "It still felt like it was Locke. It was just the separation" (Shawna interview 3).

This separation was one of the most visible changes for the students when they had returned in 10th grade. During the data collection process, the students still maintained very strong emotions concerning this separation. Interestingly, I found their words and emotions about the separation much stronger than those about the riot that had happened the year before. Melissa gave this experience from the 10th grade:

> I didn't like being separated because it already felt like you were a small school and the change and being separated made it feel even more awkward. It made it so you didn't get to meet the other people. Or separate you from people you already met. I think it had its goods; there was less trouble and more focus on the school. It was negative that you didn't get to meet people at your own school and didn't get to meet new people. (Melissa interview 1)

> One of my friends was in the black shirts and two of my friends were white shirts and we went over during their lunch to take them their cake. I think it was a big thing being separated from the other school. We didn't get to go through the change together. They were just like you go here and you go there. It made me feel like they thought we were incapable of being together as a school. I think they thought there would still be fights if we remained together. (Melissa interview 3)

The feelings of that separation remain today for the students and they still resent being separated from their friends.

Similarities to 9th grade. A second theme emerging from the students' comments was the similarities between their 9th-grade year and their 10th-grade year. Although there were some quite visible changes, there were also many similarities between old Locke and new Locke. Chris explained, "I don't remember that much changing other than the quad or the hallways" (Chris interview 3).

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Shawna continued, "That first year, it was the same as old Locke. It wasn't new. We just had new teachers. I didn't see a whole lot of new students, they were kind of laid back thinking let's see what this is about" (Shawna interview 3). There seemed to be a disconnect between the changes the students expected to happen and what they experienced that first year. Although there was much to be improved upon, Chris commented, "[T]he problems from 9th grade to 10th grade were the same. It was the same school" (Chris interview 3).

After the chaos of their freshman year, the students had high expectations for the changes Green Dot promised; however, many of them were disappointed with the reality that set in. Concerning these unmet expectations, Daniel commented, "You can expect a certain thing, but it just doesn't happen" (Daniel interview 3).

Trial year for Green Dot. A third theme emerging from the students' comments was that their first year under Green Dot felt like a trial. They understood that changes needed to occur, but they felt that 10th-grade was a learning experience for Green Dot. Chris explained, "I feel like they're testing me. I feel like an experiment. I feel that the takeover is doing that to me" (Chris interview 2). Even as they expected the takeover to create a changed school and a new learning experience, they experienced inconsistencies, changes during the school year, and many unanticipated problems in that first year. Melissa said, "It feels like we're a trial" (Focus group). Daniel's words exemplify this idea of 10th-grade as trial year. He explained:

> You're first try is never your best. You need to give it time. There were
> still a few flaws in the change. It wasn't just, we say it and it's done. And

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it's going to come out perfect. Nothing ever turns out the first time. You need to always learn from your mistakes. That's the way the first year was. (Daniel interview 3)

Shawna's words explain the idea of a trial year and the emotional affect that it had on them as students:

That first year felt like a trial year. They were just trying to see what needed to be changed and how things would go. To me it felt like a trial year; we'll see how this goes and we'll move on from there. It kinda felt bad because they were just like, we'll see what happens from there, but they weren't doing much to accommodate us and they were just seeing what needed to be changed. They made their changes and then took their year to see what else needed to be changed. (Shawna interview 3)

The students could see that the school was not ready for them in their 10th-grade year. There were many kinks to be worked out in that first year and the students felt that their first year was a test run. It was not easy for them to return to a school that was not ready to offer them an equitable education.

11th grade. From the comments and experiences gathered from the students, 11th grade seemed better than 10th grade for most of the students. The year was not perfect for them, but it was at least the same or improved.

One of the major changes that occurred was the combining of the two previously separated schools. Although the students still had different colored uniforms, students were no longer separated during lunch and had many of the same classes. Shawna wrote, "11th grade was the same. It was fun, we still had spirit . . . It was a good thing that they brought us back together" (Shawna interview 3).

The students described slight improvements, but not any major changes. Daniel wrote, "[I]t was a little better than the first year of Green Dot," and continued, "[T]hey

did a few things, but it took time to make a bigger change" (Daniel interview 3). Melissa

discussed the improvement of that second year, but still mentioned the shortcomings of

the school that year. "That junior year, I think students cared more about school. The

mindset of the students changed and it was way better. However, it was still just okay to

be at school" (Melissa interview 3).

One of the major changes that occurred that year was the shrinking of the school.

Instead of three grade levels, as the first year had all three, there were only two. With the

decrease in the student population, students began to notice that the school was beginning

to look empty. Chris explained this change in terms of school spirit and a school vibe:

> In the 11th grade, it wasn't that much different. It was getting shorter and
> shorter [the number of students shrank], it was just us and the seniors.
> This is when you noticed there wasn't that excitement anymore. At lunch,
> there wasn't that high school vibe anymore. So many things were going
> away so quickly. (Chris interview 3)

While the school year improved, the students were still left lacking. Though they

had worked out many of the kinks and brought the schools back together, there

were still feelings of isolation and inadequacies with the school.

12th grade. Although the school had become smaller and calmer, students agreed

that the school still had not met their needs in their last year. A major theme that

emerged during their conversations about their senior year was being leftovers from

LAUSD and feeling rushed out. The students discussed being the last class from LAUSD

to graduate from Locke and then how they felt that they were being pushed out.

They felt that there was no school spirit, the school was not meeting their social needs, and that they were not creating memories during their senior year. Melissa's comments described all of these feelings:

> I think that there is more focus for some kids to get them to graduate. I think that things are run a bit better. But I feel this year they're like, you're leaving, this is the last class, let's get this over with. It feels like that sometimes. It's like knowing we're the last class of the LCA. (Melissa interview 3)

Concerning the social needs of the students, Shawna explained, "They need to pay attention to how we feel" (Shawna interview 3). Chris commented, "There's not a positive vibe anymore, it just disappeared" (Chris interview 3).

Although most of the students felt that they were being rushed out, Shawna's comments explained this emphasis on education and graduation over the social needs of the students:

> There is no school spirit this year. I know they want us to graduate, but they are just doing too much. They're forcing us. We want to graduate too, but you can't keep pushing and pushing and pushing because we're going to get tired of it. (Shawna interview 3)

Shawna continued discussing the decline of the social atmosphere and the focus on being the last students from the real Locke, or the Locke under LAUSD. "They want to take away our activities . We're the last of the real Locke so we should earn this" (Shawna interview 3).

The students felt that their senior year should be special and that they should be creating special memories from their last year of high school. None of the students felt that the school was giving them the opportunities that they needed in order to create those special memories. In fact, they felt that the school

was stifling them when they should be helping them to finish their senior year with fun activities and memories of their last year in high school.

Conclusion

In this section, the students discussed the experiences they had had at Locke High School. Beginning with the riot in 9th grade, the students discussed the changes that had occurred, some of the improvements, and the decline of the social atmosphere of the school. Some of the themes that emerged from this chapter include isolation, 10th-grade as a trial year, similarities between old Locke and New Locke, and feelings of being pushed out of Locke.

Perceptions

This section discusses the perceptions students had of their school. Perceptions are "a result of attaining awareness and understanding [and] to regard as being such" (Merriam-Webster, 2011, para. 1). Thus, this section explains the awareness the students had of their school and how the students viewed and conceptualized it. This section is a description of the understanding and reality they had experienced and endured for four years. This section includes student perceptions of the school atmosphere, safety, and the quality of their school experience.

Old Locke

Under old Locke, the students described an atmosphere that was chaotic and did not help them as students. They also discussed the unsafe environment that they endured that school year.

Atmosphere. The five students primarily described the atmosphere of old Locke in negative terms. Although there was one positive area, the social scene, which will be discussed in a later section, the overall atmosphere of old Locke was dismally negative. It was not a place that promoted learning, it was not safe, and it was not a place where students wanted to be students. The school atmosphere promoted delinquency, truancy, and student misbehavior.

Oftentimes, the school faculty and security allowed students to wander around out of class. Jamilet explained, "When students wandered around, they'd just ditch and security would just let them pass" (Jamilet interview 1) (Figure 7). It was not a place that promoted students to succeed academically. Many students felt that school was not valuable. Daniel explained, "A lot of people were failing and feeling why be in school anymore? It wasn't just a few people; it was a big number" (Daniel interview 3). Locke had long been known as a drop-out factory, and comments like Daniel's helped explain why students failed to graduate from the school. Melissa described the school by explaining, "[I]t was not a high school environment; it was not what a high school should be" (Melissa interview 1).

Figure 7. Students ditching.

Daniel photo essay

Safety. Some of the students did not feel threatened at school and did not feel that Locke was the violent school that the media had portrayed it as (Foote, 2008). Jamilet explained, "Locke is not a violent school" (Jamilet interview 1). However, much of the students' sense of safety came from learning to navigate the difficult terrain of Locke. They learned where they should and should not go. They learned where fights would occur, violence would happen, and how to avoid the many gangs, cliques, and crews who promoted violence and tirelessly fought amongst themselves.

Much of the students' perception of safety and violence also came from a normalization of violence at schools. "I wasn't afraid [of coming to old Locke] or thinking that I would get beat up when I entered the door. My older brother and sister went here. And I went to Gompers, so I was used to it" (Jamilet interview 1). The

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violence that they saw often became a normal part of their school day and as long as it did not affect them and their friends, then they felt safe.

Although some of the students were not worried about the violence and felt safe at Locke, there were times when the students were scared and the violence of the school affected them. Whereas Daniel was usually able to avoid violence and navigate Locke safely, his security came at the cost of his freedom at school. He explained, "You expect a place, like a high school where we're all older to have maturity, but it gets you scared and you can't do simple stuff like get water or use the bathroom" (Daniel interview 1). The lack of safety at old Locke had prevented many of the students from participating in normal school-time practices such as using the restroom during class or walking down the halls alone. With the school situated in a historically violent neighborhood, it often felt like the school bred hostility and promoted an atmosphere of violence. Concerning this feeling, Melissa said, "I felt like we were unsafer at school than on the streets. They are pretty much the same; there is no safety at all" (Melissa interview 3).

During their 9th-grade year under LAUSD, fights were a normal part of the school day. "You always hear people talking about fights. So you constantly hear, oh did you see the fight or they got stopped by the cops but are going around the corner to finish it" (Daniel interview 1). Shawna explained that, "there were daily fights" (Shawna interview 3).

Overall, the students perceived old Locke to be a violent place where fights were normal and the violence affected their day-to-day activity. Some students became inured to the violence and it became a normal part of their day. However, many were quite

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affected by the violence as they cautiously learned to navigate the school and were forced to change the ways they acted, travelled, and spoke at school.

Quality of school experience. The students' perception of old Locke was that it was not a good school; it did not offer a great education or an appropriate school environment. None of the students felt that the education they had been receiving was adequate or comparable to what students should be receiving. Some had high expectations of Locke and their high school experience before they arrived in 9th grade — and were quickly disappointed. Others already knew Locke's history and had low expectations of their time at Locke. Sadly, many of them knew that they were entering a bad school that could not offer them the education they needed.

Upon entering Locke, Jamilet was not anticipating anything great from her years in high school. She simply went there because it was nearby. She explained:

> I didn't have high expectations; I just came here because it's close to my house. I knew that even though it's not the best school, it's up to me if I want to graduate and go to college; it's not up to the school. (Jamilet interview 3)

Although Jamilet wasn't disappointed, she also didn't have high expectations. Daniel was disappointed with what Locke offered him as a school. *He* had had expectations for his education and what the school would be able to offer him. He said:

> You expected it to be a great school where teachers help you the best way they can. You expect a place where you can learn and study and have fun. But you go through the doors and it's a different environment. (Daniel interview 1)

Whether they had entered with high expectations or low expectations, the students felt that Locke was not a quality school. Melissa expressed, "I felt it was a bad school.

There was no organization. I think they paid more attention to the people who were doing bad than the people that were doing good in school" (Melissa interview 1).

Notably, although the students knew that it was a bad school, none of the students thought that it was the worst or even one of the worst in the city. In the interview, students were asked how they felt about the following quotation and whether they agreed with it:

> The campus at 111th and San Pedro streets has long been one of the city's most troubled. This school year has been particularly difficult, with near-daily fights -- albeit on a much smaller scale -- during much of the fall and winter. (Blume & Landsberg, 2008, para. 2)

Despite having negative feelings about old Locke, they felt that it was just normal and that there were other schools in the area that were much worse. Jamilet explained, "I don't think it was one of the most troubled schools. There were other schools around us doing similar stuff" (Jamilet interview 1). Even Daniel, who had quite a negative opinion of old Locke, felt that it wasn't one of the worst (Daniel interview 3). None of the five students interviewed believed that old Locke was one of the most troubled schools in the city. Chris believed that others viewed Locke as bad, not because of violence or test scores, but because of the demographics. He explained, "Because we're colored and because we're low income, as soon as they put it in the news, they seem to see us as troubled. I don't think that we're one of the city's most troubled" (Chris interview 3).

Takeover

The takeover brought changes to the school, but the students did not think that the changes were adequate or sufficient. They also were confused about why Green Dot took over Locke.

Quality of change. When comparing old Locke to new Locke, the students didn't

perceive major changes between the two. Although they felt that the school was better,

they didn't think that it was the major change that was promised to them. Many of the

students' feelings resonated in Chris's view of the takeover:

> I remember coming in and thinking it was going to be a different school.
> They just freshened the walls, painted the hallways, and gave us different
> colored shirts. We didn't have class with other students; we were
> separated. I think it was a bad thing that they separated; it created beef
> between the two schools. (Chris interview 3)

Most students expected major changes at the school, but the changes were limited in

scale and, on the whole, not great. Daniel felt the same as Chris:

> No major changes between old Locke and new Locke. Just the teachers and
> they're trying more. The basic stuff is the same. The inside is painted, but the
> outside looks crappy. (Daniel interview 1)

In terms of change, Green Dot did not meet the expectations and hopes that the students

had had of the organization.

One of the major complaints the students had was that the changes were limited

and did not continue. Although the students were not expecting miracles, they did expect

an equitable education. They expected that if their school were going to be taken over,

Green Dot should at least give them functional facilities, an equitable education, and

social experiences similar to their peers in other schools. Daniel discussed it in this way:

> I thought it would have been different; in 9th grade they present you with
> the allusion of a great, big dramatic new Locke with a big poster. In
> reality, it's just painted. It's still the same school. I was expecting a little
> more when they talked about the takeover. At first they said they were
> going to remodel and fix a few things, "we've taken into consideration
> what you've said. You can use the lockers, we're going to do this." But
> do we use the lockers? Do they even still work? Yeah, they painted, but

do all the doors work? Do the fountains work? Many of the fountains don't even let out water. You know which ones work and which don't. They could have worked that out and cleaned things up more. They could have fixed the cleanliness of the school. If they said remodel, you'd expect a whole lot more than that. They just put in plants and tables. (Daniel interview 2)

The students resented the limited changes that were made and the continual lack of change. Chris wrote, "Green Dot could have done more, but they gave up. They just had to do a couple of twitches" (Chris interview 1). They also resented the promises made and not kept. "A lot of times, they say they are going to do this, but then don't come through and they don't do it" (Daniel interview 3).

Disappointment is the best way to describe the feelings of the students concerning the incompleteness of the takeover and how little change actually occurred for them. They did not feel that it was much different from their first year. The students were offered the following quotation related to the takeover, "It's night and day" (McGray, 2009, para. 1). When asked whether they agreed with the quotation, not one of the students said yes. They all felt that the school was marginally better than it had been the previous year, but not night and day. The following remarks were how the students described the changes at Locke:

I don't think old Locke and new Locke are complete opposites. (Jamilet interview 3)

Old Locke and new Locke are not complete opposites, but they are different. (Melissa interview 3)

Old Locke and new Locke are not night and day; it's more like no light and barely any light. (Chris interview 3)

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What the students had seen and how they viewed the takeover was definitely different from what some of the media had reported, as seen above.

Green Dot's perceived motivation to take over Locke. When asked why they thought Green Dot had taken over Locke, their answers varied and they were quite confused about the actual reasons why Locke was taken over. Many of the students were quite skeptical of Green Dot and its motive for taking over their school. Some of the students felt that Green Dot was taking over Locke for the publicity and for the opportunities it would provide for the organization. In the focus group, Chris and Daniel discussed how the media surrounding Locke would give Green Dot a media spotlight.

> Chris: I think they took us over because we were in the news. The riot was such a big thing. We were in the news everywhere. It was perfect; we had our name out there. Then they could say we were going to go in and make this school great and go help all these neighborhoods. I think they just wanted their name out.

> Daniel: I think they thought if they could make it here, they could do it anywhere. They could keep going. (Focus group)

Whether Chris and Daniel were correct about their assumptions, Green Dot did receive an astronomical amount of media attention because of the takeover of Locke. Chris commented on this response, "Green Dot chose to take over Locke because they knew they'd go to a horrible school, make it a little bit better and then get famous . . . They did what they wanted to do; now everybody is talking about them" (Chris interview 2).

Daniel also thought that Locke would be a great starting point for Green Dot to begin taking over schools. He felt that taking over Locke would help it with publicity

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and encourage other parents and communities to want Green Dot to take over their

schools:

> It could really be them testing their whole system on us, on the basic teachers and security and stuff, on a school that's trying to get there. If you put that into a school that already has a bad reputation, then if it changes, they get publicity and that's how they expand. LAUSD is no longer enough, they want Green Dot because it makes changes. (Daniel interview 2)

Although the students offered some theories about why Locke was taken over, others in

the group were not quite sure why it was taken over. Some of the reasons students gave

were fights, test scores, demographics, and the riot. Notably, some of the students cited

the riot as a reason Locke was taken over even though the riot happened seven months

after it was known that LAUSD would be handing Locke over to Green Dot. Melissa

believed that Locke was taken over, "because it was horrible. I think it had to do with the

riot and the test scores of the students, which were really bad" (Melissa interview 2).

Daniel thought similarly, "I think Green Dot took over Locke mostly because of the riot

and academic scores dropping and dropping" (Daniel interview 2). Shawna also believed

that the riot was involved in the takeover. "Maybe Green Dot took over Locke because of

the riot. I'm not sure. There were schools that were worse than Locke, right?" (Shawna

interview 2). Shawna also believed that test scores were involved, "I think it's because of

the scores. Locke had the lowest scores on the SAT and CAHSEE and reading among

students. But we're not the only school having those technical difficulties" (Shawna

interview 1).

Some of the students believed that the demographics and the race of the students

helped influence the takeover of Locke. "They wanted to give kids in this area, in low-

income area a better education" (Melissa interview 2); "If they see you as a certain color, they'll treat you a certain way. So it was probably the way they saw us." (Daniel interview 2); "The school here is mostly Latino and African American. And they say that statistics show that African Americans and Latinos are less likely to graduate from high school, so that's one reason Green Dot decided to take over Locke." (Jamilet interview 2)

Chris brought up a great point that involved demographics and socioeconomic status. He said, "They wouldn't choose to take over a school in a suburban neighborhood because people would be like, you didn't do anything" (Chris interview 2).

Some of the students believed that Green Dot genuinely wanted to help students, change the school, and inspire others to do the same. Melissa believed that Green Dot's motivation was "to change the way things are done and inspire others people to do the same thing like to change schools a step further. Sometimes you can't do a lot, but the little you can do has great effects" (Melissa interview 2). Shawna believed that Green Dot's takeover prevented Locke from being closed, "I guess Green Dot took over so that they wouldn't close Locke, so they could improve Locke" (Shawna interview 2).

The students' perceptions' of Green Dot's motivations were quite broad, varying from self-serving motivations to an inherent goodness within the organization to help Locke. Whatever Green Dot's motivation and reasoning was to take over Locke, the students were not told and did not have a great understanding or consensus.

New Locke

For the most part, the students felt and perceived the school to be better than old Locke. That it was comparatively better did not mean that there were major differences, that there had been major changes, or that the students were satisfied with the takeover. Daniel explained, "I feel like the new Locke is getting there. It hasn't improved all the way" (Daniel interview 1). Green Dot came in and started the takeover, but the students felt that there was still much for it to do.

Atmosphere. One of the changes that the students felt happened at Locke was in the organization and structure of the school. Melissa stated, "I think that it is better because it is more safe and has more structure and discipline and education wise too" (Interview 2). Overall, the students applauded the organization and the structure that Green Dot brought in; however, as will be shown later in this section, too much structure was brought in for the students and the school lost much of its social identity.

One of the greatest complaints voiced by all of the students was the loss of social activities for the students. Shawna lamented, "I feel like I'm walking into a school of boring" (Shawna interview 1). Students complained that the structure and rules made it so that they lost the fun and the excitement that they had enjoyed under old Locke. Shawna continued in a later interview,

> School is not fun anymore. It's not fun to come anymore. It needs to be fun so you can remember stuff. It doesn't always have to be related to school work. Sometimes I just want to have a different experience. (Shawna interview 2)

Although the safety and structure had improved, they came at the cost of the vibrant social atmosphere they had once felt at the school.

Safety. All the students agreed that it was safer at new Locke. Green Dot hired an outside security organization, CRST, to maintain safety at the Locke campus. These security guards, in green polo shirts and utility pants, carried handguns, pepper spray, and handcuffs (Figure 8). Many praised Green Dot and CRST for maintaining the safety at the school, however there were still complaints.

Figure 8. Guarding the lunch area.

Daniel photo essay

Although safety was a benefit under Green Dot, some of the students questioned the actual quality of that safety. Chris believed that there were *too many* guards with guns and compared it to a police state. Daniel believed that the security had just moved the tagging and the violence elsewhere:

> You have security at both ends of every corner. The graffiti just moved; they just moved from one spot to another. . . . The school could have a lot

more safety. It's not like it's the middle of the night and you could just stand there. (Daniel interview 3)

These two students brought up a great point; just because it was safer did not mean that the safety should not be improved or that the safety was of high quality.

Facilities. All of the students agreed that the facilities were not adequate and that they deserved better. From cleanliness to nonfunctioning doors, much needed to be improved at the school. At times, the conditions were humiliating and degrading for the students. Melissa described one of these instances:

> The facilities still need to be improved. The bathroom doors don't even work. Sometimes you need one of your friends to hold the door closed for you. There is only one bathroom for you to use. You have to go all the way to the first floor. It makes you feel like you don't have any options. There are closer bathrooms, but we're not allowed to use them. It kind of makes you feel like you're segregated. We're not allowed to go to that side of the school. (Melissa interview 1) (Figures 9, 10)

Figure 9. Dirty water fountain.

Daniel photo essay

Figure 10. Broken bathroom door.

Melissa photo essay

Daniel agreed with Melissa concerning these conditions, "The bathrooms are dirty and the doors don't even work" (Daniel interview1). Concerning the fountains, Daniel said, "the fountains are messy" (Daniel interview 1). Daniel earlier had explained how many of the fountains never worked. Students were not offered some of the basics that most other schools enjoy. Jamilet explained:

> [W]e have a library but we don't use it. So I think that is one thing that Locke needs is a place where you can just go in and do your work or just have the chance to pick out a book and read it on your own time. (Jamilet interview 3) (Figure 11)

Figure 11. Closed library.

Jamilet photo essay

Feeling controlled. Another element of the atmosphere that had changed under new Locke was that students felt much more controlled than before. Although acknowledging that some structure and rules are important, many of the students felt that the school had gone too far in controlling them. A little structure and control is a good thing, as Shawna pointed out, "I feel like we're being controlled. Controlled in a good way; they're like our parents. They make sure we do what we have to do to be on track" (Shawna interview 1).

However, others believed that the uniforms, arrows on the stairs, and overall structures had created a controlling atmosphere that did not foster a positive high school environment. She continued to explain how difficult it was to return to Locke and be forced to change, she said:

It was kind of hard for us to come back to a school we weren't used to. It was like we were forced to stay in one spot and couldn't go anywhere. They just expected us to get used to it. But it was hard. They didn't understand. They didn't understand how hard it was to live this change. It's like they didn't give us time to change. It takes time for people to change. It took time for me to change. (Shawna interview 1)

One of the ways students felt controlled was in being forced to wear a uniform.

Daniel explained how uniform enforcement controlled students:

Uniforms are the worst part. Students don't know how to add color to the black, white, and khaki. I feel like I am being controlled and told what to wear on a day to day basis. If I don't come in uniform, I don't get my education that day. I think it's a way to keep people in control on a certain spot or level. You're wearing this; there's nothing higher or lower. (Daniel interview 2)

The atmosphere under old Locke was not conducive to learning; however, new

Locke was not creating a student-friendly atmosphere for students. In comparing old

Locke with new Locke, Chris explained:

The school is more enforced, more strict, they set rules for us and try and make sure we don't break them. In 9th grade they had rules, I don't know what they were but they had them. They have more rules now and try to enforce them. (Chris interview 3)

Daniel attempted to describe the differences between the structures and

rules under old Locke and the structures and rules under new Locke:

It's pretty simple. 9th grade it's free. After 9th grade you're told what to do. Whoever is in charge, they control you. You're controlled. Free. Controlled. Freedom to do whatever you want. Here, it's stay in class. You stay here, or go to the dean and get detention. You'll stay here, you're going to learn, and you're going to do something high. After high school, you're going to do something with your life. It's not expecting anything. Now you're expected to do something. That's the way I see it. Two sides. One here. One there. That's it. (Daniel interview 3)

Daniel described a school that forced compliance to the rules instead of allowing

the students the opportunity to comply on their own. In the focus group, the

students discussed how these rules affected them and made them feel:

> Daniel: Signs everywhere. Do not skate in this area. Walk through the
> hallways a certain way.

> Jamilet: Little arrows on the stairs.

> Daniel: They're just stairs. There are a lot of people, but we can figure it
> out on our own. They're just stairs.

> Jamilet: It's not like we're dumb little children.

> Shawna: We can figure it out.

> Chris: When you critically think about that, they're pretty much just
> telling us how we're going to end up in the future. They're playing
> a role into people are going to be telling us what to do. We're not
> going to speak out to things. There's always going to be
> somebody telling us what to do. Why can't we be the one's that
> are telling us what to do? Why can't we do it? Why can't we have
> a voice.

> Xavier: We're so used to instructions that when we grow up, we need
> instructions. We can't be independent and make our own
> decisions because instructions are so built up in our mind that we
> need them. (Focus group)

This control, the structures and rules, and the separation of schools with gates, fences,

and plastic barriers made the students feel that the school was similar to a jail. Daniel

commented on the rules and the manner in which they had the students move around, and

how it resembled a jail. He said:

> If you notice carefully, everybody is going the same way and they're
> walking the same way and there headed to the same area. There is no
> emotion. It's like a jail or something. You're just going from point A to
> point B. We're all just in one line headed to the quad area. (Daniel
> interview 1)

Concerning the structure of the school, Chris described these similarities:

> Our school is structured in a very jail-like way. Green Dot came and
> made it into more of a jail. They made it into a maze. You can't go past a
> barrier. We're locked up. That's where they want us to be. (Chris
> interview 1)

Figure 12. Locked up.

Chris photo essay

Daniel felt the same way about the structure, explaining:

> It feels like you're too trapped. The windows have that net thing on them.
> You go outside and you see a bunch of fences with the black covers. We
> just feel isolated to everyone else. Every school is divided into its own
> section; we don't have a community outside. (Daniel interview 1)

These students described how the school atmosphere rivaled that of a jail.

They felt controlled, told where to go, isolated, and limited in their interactions.

According to these students, not everything had improved with the emergence of a new

Locke.

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Conclusion

The students described much change that had occurred at Locke over the four years they had been there. However, they expected there to be more change and for the change to help them as students in meaningful ways. The students perceived the takeover as a job that was started, but not finished. Although Green Dot had initiated some reforms for the students, the students felt that Green Dot needed to continue with the reforms until they had an adequate campus and an equitable education.

Stories

Stories help outsiders understand the students and the ways they saw the school. Stories are "an account of incidents or events" (Merriam-Webster, 2011, para. 1). For the students, these stories were told to better describe events at Locke High School, the people at Locke High School, and Locke High School itself. This section, although similar to the *experiences* section, has been specifically defined. *Stories* are events in which the students did not directly participate. If it was an event that the students were a part of and an active part of the experience, the event went in the experiences section. If the students were a third party, not an active participant in the story, or heard the story from somebody else, that story went under the stories section. This section contains stories that the students have shared with me about Locke; however, many other stories also fell into other sections. To better understand those sections, the stories were placed in those respective sections, leaving fewer stories for this section.

Old Locke

Many of the stories concerning old Locke concerned the difficulties and dangers

the students faced while attending the school. These stories help the reader to understand

the traumatic struggles that the students described as their first year.

The first set of stories describes the dangerous terrain the students maneuvered

each day in order to succeed:

> In a way I felt scared being there. Now you can go use the restroom or get
> a drink and come back. Before, you couldn't just walk around the
> hallways by yourself. You're too scared to just walk around the hallways.
> Sometimes you'll see a couple of students just walking around looking
> intimidating. You think, they might take something from you or hit you
> and there's nobody around to look. I actually saw someone in the
> bathroom and he came out bleeding. I guess he was beat up. If you're
> going to use the restroom, you might as well use it with a teacher walking
> by. (Daniel interview 1)

During their freshman year, fires at school became a common occurrence.

Sometimes they would send the students to the football field, and sometimes they would

not even issue an alarm or warning. The students ended up spending quite a bit of time

on the football field their freshman year.

> And the fire, they didn't ever warn us about it. It was right by my class in
> the bungalows. That was a little bit scary. That's pretty creepy. (Jamilet
> interview 3)

> That was funny. The bomb threat. It just made our lunch longer and
> became something positive for us. (Jamilet interview 3)

> They would burn the trash cans or the book room and we had to go to the
> football field and then they were still throwing trash cans at people. When
> we were all dismissed, we saw these two guys trying to take a phone away
> from another guy. The guy wouldn't let go of his phone. They were
> socking him and hitting him and kicking him. He wouldn't let go of his
> phone. Then they dropped him to the floor and I saw one of the guys
> stomp on his head and you just heard his head hit the pavement. And we

were just like wow. It was still on campus, by the Avalon gate. (Melissa interview 3)

The situations that the students were put in or that they had to endure were often dangerous or put them into areas where they saw dangerous activities. They saw crimes and were normalized to violence on and around campus.

Students also used stories to describe the dire environment in which they were expected to receive an education:

It was easy to ditch. I did it once toward the end of the school year. Probably the only time I ever did it. (Jamilet interview 3)

You're sitting in a classroom trying to learn and out of nowhere you smell weed coming out of the vents. You could just smell it coming out of the vents. (Daniel interview 3)

Jamilet used a story to describe how Locke had been and how it had affected her siblings even before she had arrived to Locke as a student:

I think the school is better under Green Dot because when I was in 9th grade, it seemed like they didn't even care about students. Some classes had substitutes, but in general, I think that they just didn't care. They are more helpful, especially with seniors, with the college stuff. I don't think that would have happened under old Locke. When my sister came here and she was a 12th grader, they didn't help her. She didn't graduate. Up to this day, she still doesn't know why; she had all of her credits. She still doesn't know. (Jamilet interview 2)

Not all of the stories the students gave of old Locke were negative. Shawna used a story to describe how one teacher cared about her and the other students.

In 9th grade, I had a teacher named Mr. Andrews. He taught life skills. He brought pictures of famous singers, RB and disco. He told us they came from Locke. So Locke really helped people achieve their goals. (Shawna interview 1)

Takeover

There were very few stories of the takeover from the students, largely as a result of the passive role the students had had in the takeover. They did not take part in the takeover, but left school for the summer after their freshman year and returned in the fall to a changed school. Without involvement in the takeover, it was difficult for the students to share stories about the takeover. The stories that the students did have were limited. The first two stories concerned Green Dot's role in the takeover. Shawna relayed a story she had heard about a press conference that was held in front of Locke. She said, "I heard that there was people from Green Dot, posing as though they were parents in front of Locke. There was staff pretending to be our parents. They were protesting to make a change at Locke" (Shawna interview 1).

The second story concerning the takeover came from Chris, who described how he viewed Green Dot's actions concerning the takeover:

> Locke was a school that was continuously targeted for their low test scores, outrageous behaviors, and all these negative things. Green Dot came in and decided to take over because they'd give them a little bit more and seem great. It's like there's a baby and it's crying, so you give it a cookie. It'll be quiet for a while. You're not taking care of the baby, you didn't find out why it was crying, you just gave it a cookie. You didn't try to take care of it or carry it, you didn't try to take it to its mother. You didn't try to find the root of the problem, you just shut it up for a while. (Chris interview 3)

The last story described how students returned to a changed school in 10th grade. They did not have any role; they just returned to a school that had been taken over and changed. Melissa described it this way, "Everything just happened. I came back my 10th grade year and signed up for classes and things were changing by themselves. I didn't

have a choice, I guess, it was just them changing what they think needed it" (Melissa interview 3). The students were limited in their stories concerning the takeover. Although they were able to explain the takeover in other terms, such as academics, socially, and personally, they did not have stories about the takeover.

New Locke

Similar to the takeover, there were few stories concerning the new Locke. The stories that were shared, primarily discussed faculty, friends, and family. Old Locke was rife with stories. One reason there were so many stories about old Locke was that there were many memorable events, most of them dealing with incivility at the school. Because of the changed structured, enforced rules, and limited extracurricular activities, students had less to talk about and therefore, fewer stories to tell about new Locke. They were able to describe the school and discuss how they felt about the school, but they were limited with their stories.

The first story explained the interactions between the dean and a student. Daniel was amazed at the response the student had to the dean. He told this story, "You see people talk a lot about teachers or a dean. The dean did something really nice for a student. The student said thank you, but then started talking trash about him. I don't know why" (Daniel interview 3).

The next two stories dealt with friends and how they managed separation and isolation at the school:

> One time, when I was in tenth grade and we had separate lunches, the black shirts and the white shirts lunch. Two of my friends were at the white shirts' lunch and one of my friends was in the black shirts' lunch. It was her birthday and we went over there to their lunch and we took her a

cake and it was really fun being involved with the other students because we didn't really get to see them. So it was a fun thing at another lunch. It felt like we knew more people. (Melissa interview 1)

Once we were in the quad and I was sitting with the soccer team. Instead of goofing around, we were reminiscing of the old times. When we went to soccer, we were talking to the boys from the other schools, and they didn't understand. We realized that it sucks now; it's not the same. (Chris interview 3)

Shawna described how students were on a bus and ready for a fieldtrip and then not allowed to go on the fieldtrip. She described the event and how unfair she believed the actions of the administration were toward the students:

Yesterday we went on a fieldtrip. Ms. Michelle and the counselors had to check grades because students with an F couldn't go. It was weird because students already paid to go on the fieldtrip. The money wasn't refunded. I felt bad and I know that they felt bad because they were excited. Then they came and their hopes just went down. I think that is how they want us to learn a lesson. It's not really a good way. I guess this was their plan, students do their detention minutes in order to go on a fieldtrip or participate in senior activities. The new thing is they shouldn't have an F on their report card. It's like they're tricking us. (Shawna interview 3)

Chris shared a story at once simple and scary: "I remember there was somebody shot in front of the school" (Chris interview 3). Chris only briefly mentioned one shooting when there were two shootings in front of the school under new Locke. It was interesting to note how little attention the shootings received from both students and the media compared to events from old Locke. In fact, in all of the data collection, this story was the only brief mention of either of the two shootings.

The last story described an event at home with a student's family. Shawna was marked absent in a class while she was at school and the school called home to let her family know. She described this event at home:

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My family is more aggressive towards me, because when I said they called
my mom, my mom then called my aunts. Then I had to get lectured by my
mom and my aunts. They always call my mom. Even on furlough days,
they call and tell my mom I don't have school. It's a day I could have fun,
but I have to stay home. (Shawna interview 1)

Conclusion

These stories helped the students understand the school they were attending and to

share that world with us. The limited amount of stories about the takeover and new

Locke sections also help us to understand the school. Old Locke had so many more

events, both positive and negative, that the students remembered and shared as stories.

Since the takeover, students had had limited activities and few events that would warrant

their remembering or sharing as a story. Though their lives were important and they were

doing great things at school, they had not experienced the kind of memorable events they

remembered from old Locke.

<div align="center">

Academic Impact of the Takeover

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The area of academics is where students discussed the education they had

received. The academic impact of the takeover section included the teachers, the

classroom experience, and how they were able to learn—or not able to learn.

From analyzing the comments from the students, one could conclude both that

this area had been the most changed and that it was the area that could still use the most

improvement. Some of the students felt that drastic changes had been made but that they

were not adequate. The educational atmosphere was much better than old Locke, but not

yet what they deserved. This section will discuss academics under old Locke, the

changes in the takeover, the status of academics under new Locke, and the impact that

this change had made on the students.

Old Locke

Students overall described the education that old Locke had offered as inadequate.

Though they had had some teachers who had cared, they described an educational

atmosphere in which the majority of teachers had not taught adequately.

Academic atmosphere. The students were unanimous in their description of the

educational atmosphere of old Locke. It had been a negative environment in which it was

difficult to learn. In describing this situation, Daniel explained, "[U]nder old Locke, I'd

come to class and I wouldn't feel anything. If you were in class or out of class it didn't

matter" (Daniel interview 2). Jamilet continued with this description of the school:

> It was sort of like a zoo, but it depended on what kind of classroom you
> were in. There were some classrooms where the teacher wasn't scared to
> tell the students to be quiet and sit down or kick them out of class.
> Sometimes the students would keep the teacher quiet. (Jamilet interview
> 3)

Many felt that the students ran the school. Many teachers would not confront the

students and allowed them to disrupt the class. Jamilet also described a school with many

academic inconsistencies. Whereas some classrooms had teachers who made a great

effort to teach, in many classrooms this attention did not happen.

Many of the students did not have credentialed teachers in their classrooms.   The

school was often unable to fill teaching positions and hired substitute teachers and long-

term substitute teachers to fill those positions:

> I remember in my Algebra class, I had three different teachers. One of
> them was this guy who was in the army and he talked about it. He may

have got kicked out, but I think he quit. We had a sub for a while, we had different subs. All those different teachers were subs. They wouldn't try to quiet us down and just read a newspaper. (Chris interview 3)

Even having classrooms filled with credentialed teachers did not mean that teaching or learning was going on. Students continuously described the difficulties of learning at old Locke:

My learning experience wasn't good under Old Locke. (Chris interview 2)

There was a lot of chaos, confusion in a way. There was no effort at all from teachers and students. (Daniel interview 1)

I don't remember anything important that I learned from 9th grade. So, if things weren't sticking to me, they could have done a better job. (Jamilet interview 2)

In 9th grade, there were classes that worked out and some that didn't. The teacher would speak for 20 minutes and run out of things to say. If you do that process for 9th to 12th grade, are you really prepared for college? Are you ready to see life outside of high school? (Daniel interview 2)

In some classes, teachers were strict and cared, but there were teachers who didn't care or just gave up on the students. I'll be honest, sometimes teachers would offer help, but the students just wouldn't take it. (Jamilet interview 3)

Overall, it was difficult to learn and to get ahead at old Locke. The overall atmosphere was not focused on academics and many of the classes did not offer the students the skills and knowledge they needed for graduation and beyond. The lack of priority that academics were given can be seen through this story by Melissa:

I remember we had a health class with Mr. Minix and it was in G11 and they moved us to a bungalow, which was in very bad condition, because they were going to use that room for people that had detention or that were ditching class. And everybody was like, they're going to take away our classroom for students who aren't doing what they're supposed to be doing. It made me feel that they didn't care about people who were

actually trying to go to class and they cared more about other people who
didn't care about school. So they paid more attention to students who
didn't care against somebody who did. (Melissa interview 1)

It would be unfair to say that no learning was happening at old Locke or that there

were not refuges at the school where academics were a priority. Melissa explained, "not

all classes were like zoos, there were some people that took school seriously . . . there

were some of them that were chaotic. Some of them, the kids wouldn't care" (Melissa

interview 3). Shawna felt that there were good teachers at old Locke. She explained,

"There were some teachers that cared and some that didn't. They made me want to come

to school; I was glad to have them as my teacher" (Shawna interview 1). Oftentimes, the

teachers were just under-resourced and lacked support. Although teachers could put forth

a great effort, often it was not enough for the students. The following story by Daniel

shows the effort that one teacher put forth in an effort to help students:

> In 9th grade, I was in the MESA program. There were about 20 kids. We
> would do something hands on and visual. He'd have us build a bridge out
> of toothpicks and a certain amount of marshmallows. It was a little
> challenge. The whole class went to USC for a competition and we had to
> make a catapult or a trebuchet. You're supposed to build it, take it, and
> see if it actually works. It was kinda funny because that day, we were
> pretty confident with what we had. We went there and there were other
> schools and they had their stuff completely incredibly better than ours.
> We just had these plastic tubes and we have to make the catapult of
> trebuchet. The other schools had a wooden set with actual wood actually
> building a whole thing. Our weights were just gram weights they would
> use in class taped all around. They actually had the weight and used bean
> bags or weights that were actually the height. It was a pretty fun day
> because we don't just do stuff here but we got to see what other schools
> got, and the got a lot more. I haven't really seen any program like that
> here. Back then they were actually trying to do something. They actually
> had stuff that was better. We still have problems with money, so buying
> good stuff would be a problem where other schools would have the money
> to buy nice stuff. (Daniel interview 1)

Though there had been teachers at the school who worked hard to teach the students and create a learning atmosphere, the overall quality of the Locke's academics was dismal. Students were not given an equitable education and the atmosphere prevented many students who wanted to learn from learning. The students suffered from the academic atmosphere under old Locke.

Teachers. Old Locke had had quite a large staff, 126 teachers during the 2007-08 school year (Ed-Data, 2010). Overall, the students appreciated the teachers but knew that many of them should be doing more for them. The students understood that a primary reason that their education under old Locke was not adequate was due to the teachers. They felt that many of the teachers did not care about the quality of teaching and the resulting education the students received.

There were times when students were able to have a great teacher. Melissa had had some positive experiences with teachers. "I remember that there were some teachers that really cared. Sometimes we did just have to follow instructions out of the book and just do worksheets. Some teachers would teach" (Melissa interview 3).

However, not all students had positive experiences with teachers. Chris stated, "[I]n 9th grade, there wasn't a big connection between teachers and students" (Chris interview 3). Daniel wrote, "Like a teacher could give their assignments however they want and not care if you do it or not. That's how they saw you, as a grade, not as an actual person they would go out and help" (Daniel interview 1).

Some of the students believed that the students had made it difficult for the teachers to teach. According to Shawna, "[T]he teachers and I worked under old Locke. It wasn't the teachers, it was the students. The students made the teacher give up or almost" (Shawna interview 2). Chris explained, "I remember those teachers who would just sit there with a newspaper and try to get our attention, we wouldn't listen, and they'd just give up on the students. But not all the teachers did that" (Chris interview 3). But others believed that it was the teachers' fault. Daniel said, "[W]e as students are reflected by the teachers. So our actions are reflected by what we get by others. If there is no effort on their part, we have no effort to give" (Daniel interview 1). Jamilet stated, "I had to teach myself" (Jamilet interview 3).

Takeover

With the takeover, Green Dot brought new teachers and changed the academic environment of the school. The students praised the teachers for their hard work and had quite a loyalty to them. Although they still had many criticisms concerning academics under new Locke, they were grateful for the teaching staff and the work they had put into helping the students. There was quite a contrast between academics at old and new Locke:

> The takeover has affected it in a good way because now I feel that I am more prepared for college than I was in the 9th grade. I think it's a result of Green Dot because there is more discipline and more of you wanting to put your effort into things because even though you are your own person, you feed off of what everybody is doing. And if nobody's doing their work, you don't want to be the only one doing your work. (Melissa interview 2)

> The effort, caring, and their whole basic structure of teaching under old Locke was lecture, work, and then go sit at the desk. They'd say no

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phones, but have their phones out. Now, they are like I'll help you in a
second when I'm done helping this student. They walk around and help
all the time. It's a big change. If they care, then we should care. (Daniel
interview 2)

It is definitely more calm. It is a learning environment. No students in
class screaming or just ignoring the teacher. They brought better staff and
they made it better. There's more help. They brought better counselors.
It's a more belonging environment. (Jamilet interview 1)

Now I have to try even more. They set their expectations and then expect
you to do more. They expect you to take honors and AP classes. At old
Locke they'd expect you to do it but not help; they'd turn the other way.
Now they expect you to make and achieve high goals and help you do it.
The help from a teacher affects how we see it. (Daniel interview 2)
The overall academic atmosphere improved greatly under Green Dot.

Although the teachers may not have been more experienced, the students felt that

they cared more and showed the students how much they cared. The students felt

this change and generally wanted to participate in lessons and be a part of their

own education.

Teachers. Many of the teachers at new Locke came from old Locke. Students

commented that the teachers who decided to remain at Locke were the teachers that cared

under old Locke. Along with the teachers from old Locke, many new teachers came.

The students had many compliments to give the teachers who had taught them during the

takeover:

I think that the teachers [now] are kind of better because they seem to have
a closer relationship with their students than before . . .The teachers are
more strict and have a structured policy of where it is required of you to
put effort in to get things done. They give you the choice of doing it or
not doing it and you have the choice to be more responsible and follow
guidelines …They are more supportive and you grow a closer relationship
to them. And they are almost always there when you need the help.
(Melissa interview 2)

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I see more care from the teachers about the students. They stay after school and always offer help in different ways. Some teachers are also available in the morning; I guess they're flexible. (Jamilet interview 2)

Old Locke teachers weren't horrible, but I guess it was too much for them to handle and maybe that's why they didn't do their job right. The teachers from Green Dot, they are just doing their job good. They show you why they try to help you. They don't tell you to do this assignment for nothing. They explain why it's going to help you. It's more in a friendly way. They're not like, I'm a teacher and I went to college and I'm better than you. (Jamilet interview 2)

I know the teachers here are here for us. (Chris interview 1)

I didn't have a teacher that didn't offer help. I had a lot of teachers that were loving and caring. (Chris interview 3)

The students felt quite a connection and a loyalty to the teachers under new Locke.

Although they believed that the education was still inadequate, as discussed below, they

were grateful for the effort, care, and concern the teachers were putting forth.

New Locke

The students unanimously said that academics under Green Dot had improved

greatly over academics under LAUSD. Though the students still saw much lacking in the

education that they were receiving, they complimented Green Dot and the teachers for

making great academic changes at the school.

One of the major changes that had occurred under Green Dot was changing the

whole academic atmosphere at the school. The students commented:

Learning under new Locke is better. I feel like I learn things. Sometimes I even tell my mom, did you know this happened. And she said how do you know about that, and I'm just like I pay attention. I guess things are sticking to my head. (Jamilet interview 2)

I would say the school is better, the whole feeling. Like, you just feel comfortable and more into the school. It falls into how the teachers are.

Like how a teacher reacts to a student. They're not like this is an A student I'll treat them this way or this is an F student and I'll treat them this way. They treat all the students equally. If everybody's equal and treated the same, you don't feel that weird about it. (Daniel interview 2)

It is definitely more calm. It is a learning environment. No students in class screaming or just ignoring the teacher. They brought better staff and they made it better. There's more help. They brought better counselors. It's a more belonging environment. (Jamilet interview 1)

In addition to an overall better academic atmosphere, the students felt that the faculty cared about them and their education:

Under Green Dot, there's more effort, there's more caring. Teachers don't just give out work, they expect more from you. They expect you to overdo it. (Daniel interview 1)

Now I have to try even more. They set their expectations and then expect you to do more. They expect you to take honors and AP classes. At old Locke they'd expect you to do it but not help; they'd turn the other way. Now they expect you to make and achieve high goals and help you do it. The help from a teacher affects how we see it. (Daniel interview 2)

The students were pleased with the changed academic atmosphere, caring teachers, and general concern that the faculty had for their education.

Teachers. In the descriptions the students gave, a large contrast emerged between the teachers under old Locke and the teachers under new Locke. The students praised the teachers for their efforts and the manner in which they treated the students:

I know when I need help, I can depend on my teachers or counselors. I always get help. (Shawna interview 2).

The teaching and education has improved. The teachers have more creative ways to reach students . . . Students are more focused and care more about what's going on and teachers make an effort . . . They are willing to help; you just got to talk to them. (Melissa interview 1)

Young teachers were exciting and wanted to teach us. They helped us achieve and they continue to help us to achieve. (Chris interview 3)

If you see a teacher that's spending hours trying to do things, it kind of gets you thinking. They're not paid more to do that; they want you to succeed. If they can do that, why can't we put in our part and put in the other half. (Daniel interview 2)

The teachers now are more supportive and you grow a closer relationship to them. And they are almost always there when you need the help. (Melissa interview 2) (Figure 13)

Students even noticed that teachers were being monitored and expected to meet expectations and growth standards:

I noticed since last year, people would come in and examine teachers and the way they teach. If we have a bad grade, or almost a fail, the counselor will call you in to talk and they'll inform our parents. It's too personal. It's not a bad thing; it's actually a good thing. (Shawna interview 2)

The students noticed great changes in the teaching that was happening at Locke and in their classrooms. Watching teachers teach better had many students wanting to be better students and try harder. The students were more inspired to do their part in gaining an education.

Figure 13. A classroom at Locke.

Jamilet photo essay

Criticisms

Although the academics were much improved from their 9th-grade year, the students had come to realize that the education that they were receiving was still not adequate. It may have been leaps and bounds above the LAUSD education they were receiving; however, it was still not adequate in comparison to other schools in the nation. As they had prepared for college, taken SATs, and discussed education with people outside of the school, they realized that they were not being fully prepared for college and receiving a rigorous education. Although they were thankful to Green Dot for making improvements, they still demanded more. For these students, better was not enough for them; they wanted equitable. The following remarks explained the students' overall feeling toward Green Dot and academics:

It's not perfect, but it is better. You could get something good out of it, although, a certain improvement is it needs to be more challenging. For example it needs some more electives. It could offer more classes you may need for college, like AP classes. (Jamilet interview 1)

It made me realize that I'm not receiving a quality education. It's not that I was expecting a quality education, because I wasn't, I haven't been receiving one since I was young. I'm not going to expect one now that Green Dot came in. (Chris interview 2)

I feel that [our education] is not equal as other schools. It doesn't prepare you as much as rich schools. (Melissa interview 2)

The new focus on academics was better and had helped many, but still did not

meet student needs. They also explained that the improvements between old

Locke and new Locke were not as great as they seemed to appear. This point can

be seen in the focus group discussion below:

Daniel: It's because they over-exaggerated things in the beginning.

Chris: I think that's why people think Green Dot is so good now. It's like we had nothing and now they gave us something so small but we took it as so big and now we worship it. I don't think we should settle for less. Honestly, it's better than what we had in 9th grade, but it's not what we deserve. It's still not quality education.

Jamilet: No. For sure. They're not preparing us for college and now it's too late now that we're on our way out of here. They're not challenging us. We do need stronger education.

Melissa: Now, we're in class and we feel like we're smart. But one of my biggest fears is going to college and seeing how much I'm not prepared and finding out I'm not as smart as I think.

Jamilet: That's one of my fears too. Going to college and having a hard time too. (Focus group)

Chris believed strongly that Green Dot was not helping students succeed. He took

a powerful picture that symbolically showed what he believed Green Dot was doing for

the students (Figure 14). He also wrote:

> There are millions of students going through this school but only few get
> to get out. This school has a systematical problem where it isn't helping
> the student exceed in life instead reproducing them in the same area and
> making sure that these low class Americans don't become dominant.
> (Chris photo essay, 2011, p. 12)

The students were aware that if they wanted to go to college, they would need to

catch up to be on track with other college students. They were also aware that Green Dot

and LAUSD have failed them in this area.

One of the areas that the students believe that Green Dot could improve the school

is by offering more diverse classes and higher-level classes:

> The only foreign language they offer here is Spanish. They could have
> offered something like Portuguese or Japanese. I think they still need to
> work on that. (Jamilet interview 1)

Figure 14. Trying to get out.

 Chris photo essay

> Melissa: In my personal opinion, I feel that it has helped make me take school more seriously and see what I want to be in life. It has helped me, even if the whole school isn't good.

> Daniel: Do these classes actually help us though? Push us further than what we can already do?

> Melissa: I feel limited. King Drew has so many AP classes that we don't have. I wanted to take AP Spanish Literature and it wasn't offered. So how can I make a progression when the classes aren't offered?

> Jamilet: It has been positive and negative. They haven't offered the classes I wanted. But they have helped me think more about college. I do feel we need to have different electives or more AP classes. (Focus group, 2011)

Some believed that the classes offered did not provide the rigor or adequate preparation

for college:

> The best thing about the takeover is having [graduation] requirements similar to the A-G. They try to prepare you to go to college, even though

some of the classes aren't that challenging. I don't think they are challenging like a college level. They should tell you what you'll face in college and how challenging it will be. Other schools had classes that prepared them for the SAT. I think that is what affected me. I've already been denied to three UCs and I think that's why. (Jamilet interview 2)

Another area that in which the students believed there should have been improvement was in the resources that the school offered the teachers and the students. They were able to see what other schools had and saw that they were not receiving the same high quality resources that many of their peers were:

Along with the simple stuff, they could have changed the way we see our classes. Not just an empty room; before we'd at least have a classroom set of books. Now we have a bookroom but no books for the classroom, they could have changed that. Not having books is like a slap in the face. (Daniel interview 2)

It needs to improve education wise, the investment that goes into the students, because students don't have adequate material. (Melissa interview 1)

I think that the resources are one of the most important things. If teachers don't have the resources, they can't teach. If we had better resources, than I think we could learn better. (Chris, Focus group)

I think that rich schools give more financial support and you can't do anything without it. (Melissa interview 2)

The students felt that the takeover had moved the academic atmosphere of the school in the right direction, but failed to continue the reforms needed to offer the students the education they need.

Both Jamilet and Chris used locks in their photo essays to represent the type of education they were receiving. Jamilet explained:

I don't think my education fits me well because I would of like to learn a real foreign language like Portuguese. I feel like this would of made education fit me and might of help me to be interested in different career.

Also they could have offered more visual arts like guitar classes or carpentry; this would of helped me with college application or scholarships. The door symbolizes the lack of vary of classes and the hands that are trying to open it is me. (Jamilet photo essay)

Sadly, Jamilet felt that doors were being closed to her that she was unable to open. Both symbolic and real, Jamilet can see that the schooling she receives now will affect her for the rest of her life and the path she will be able to take in life. (figures 15 and 16)

Figure 15. Locked out of school.

Jamilet photo essay

Figure 16. Locked with no combination.

Chris photo essay

Similarly, Chris felt that the education that he was receiving was not unlocking his mind.

He wrote, "This education being taught at Locke isn't unlocking the minds of these

students. . . . I don't think I am college ready. Simple as that" (Chris photo essay). The

picture that Chris took showed a combination lock that is keeping a gate closed. Similar

to Jamilet, Chris felt that Green Dot was locking them out of an education and a future

that was available to them, just on the other side of the gate — but they were not given

the tools to get there.

Conclusion

Under old Locke, the academic atmosphere was dismal, the teaching sporadic,

and the learning difficult. With the takeover came many changes to the academic

atmosphere. There was a great effort on the part of the teachers and faculty to help create

a positive academic atmosphere. Even though the school had changed for the positive

under new Locke, the students were still not receiving an equitable education. They

wanted to be better prepared for college, receive a variety of classes, and have equitable

and positive resources to aid in their learning.

<center>**Social Impact of the Takeover**</center>

This section will examine how the students viewed the social atmosphere and

their social lives while at Locke. This issue is one of the major areas that changed under

Green Dot and, according to most students, for the worse. Though Green Dot was able to

establish rules and structures, it was never able to offer the students the social life they

had had under LAUSD.

Old Locke

For the most part, students felt that the social life under LAUSD was great. They

were able to interact with friends, share their lunchtime together, and participate in

school-sponsored activities on and off campus. Though safety issues and being at a new

school affected some, the majority of students were able to find a niche where they fit in.

Most of the students had many positive things to say about the social atmosphere, the

activities, and the time they had with friends. Chris described the school in this way:

> My 9th grade year, Locke was a school full of energy like any other
> school. It was full of excitement. It has problems like any other school,
> but it had a vibe. People were running, walking, talking. Like any high
> school shown in TV shows like some type of Glee type of stuff. It was a
> great school. . . . That was old Locke. (Chris interview 1)

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Daniel, being new to the school, had had a different experience. He explained, "The only place I felt I belonged was in the class actually doing work. Outside you saw people fighting and it gets you scared like at any moment you could get hit or something" (Daniel interview 1). He also felt that the safety at the school had prevented him from being able to enjoy the social aspects of the school.

Takeover

With the takeover came changes in the structure of the school, rules, and manner in which students could interact with each other. These circumstances were in stark contrast to the freedoms the students enjoyed when Locke was under LAUSD. Although the lack of structure and unenforced rules under old Locke hurt the safety and academic atmosphere at the school, students were able to thrive socially. It was quite difficult for them to return in separate schools, with separate lunches, and a structure that limited the social interactions among the students. The students discussed the difficulties of being separated.

Separation. The separation of the schools was one of the biggest issues the students complained about concerning the takeover. Because they had enjoyed social freedoms the year before, they felt as though they had lost something when Green Dot came in. In the focus group, they discussed this separation and all felt that they had been wronged as students by being separated:

> Chris: Socially, I think Green Dot created tensions between the schools. It's not good to be separated. It's not good to put two people in different places because kids want everything to be equal. And there's always problems when kids get something that another doesn't.

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Shawna: They should have never separated us. Since Locke changed, I wanted to experience that change with my friends.

Melissa: It's like them saying we're not capable of going through this change together.

Jamilet: Yes, it did help us focus on school, but we lost a social experience. Now we don't have older students to look up to.

Chris: I think it was good to have somebody older. When I was in 9th grade I had a class with seniors and they helped me to grow up. They made me watch what I say and how I'm going to act. In the other schools, I see these kids act so immature. It comes from us not interacting with one another.

Melissa: They're going through the same things we went through at that age and you can help make a difference. The separation just doesn't let you do that.

Shawna: The one thing I don't like is about new Locke is how they just push us around. We're not little kids. We're not 5 years old.

Melissa: I mean, they don't even trust us with what we wear.

Daniel: It's because they viewed us as how we were. They want us to keep changing and not worsening ourselves. (Focus group)

The students absolutely hated being separated. They hated the separation that divided them into two schools and they hated the isolation that prevented them from experiencing school with the other Locke schools. The students discussed how being separated from each other in their 10th-grade year affected them:

Because there are small schools and everybody is separate. In 10th grade, they divided students randomly. We couldn't even have lunch together. I guess it did affect us because I missed a year with my close friends from middle school. (Jamilet interview 1)

It changed a lot. It changed within schools. I remember the first year we were separated; we were separated by the color of our shirts. I didn't understand why that happened. They didn't like tell us why or let us know. It's like we were separated from our close friends we've known for

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a long time. We'd have to wait all day to see them. It felt like segregation. (Shawna interview 1)

In the 9th grade, everything was mixed. And then it went from that to being separated by what shirt you were wearing. Like if you were wearing a white shirt or a black shirt, you had no contact with the other school. So it was hard to maintain those friendships. (Melissa interview 2)

It was difficult for the students to be separated; it only added to the difficulty not knowing Green Dot's purpose for the separation. This separation from their friends gave the students a sense of loss and that elements of their social life were taken away.

Isolating the LLCA from the rest of Locke. Dividing the former LAUSD students into separate schools and separate lunches hurt them socially. In addition to being separated from one another, these former LAUSD students were separated from the rest of the school. Used to an open campus under LAUSD, the new barriers, gates, and plastic tarps were an eyesore and a sad reminder of their isolation. Students were prevented and banned from visiting the other Locke schools. A new school inhabited the area where there classrooms once were—and they were banned from visiting it. This isolation affected them socially and the way they felt about the school. Chris lamented, "They separated us and they structurally separated us. They put tarps on the gates and barriers between us. It isn't right" (Chris interview 2). Shawna explained how it affected her socially and how it made her feel:

I think the worst thing is our separation from different schools. I think that's how they organize; that's Green Dot's law or rule. I can't get used to it. It makes me feel bad. I know people from other schools and I have to wait or I don't get to say hi. (Shawna interview 2)

Melissa felt the same way as Chris and Shawna. She agreed that the schools should not have been separated. She discussed how as a school, they could have changed together:

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I wouldn't have divided the schools so much so that you completely don't even know any of the 9th graders or 10th graders or the 11th graders because I think that instead of dividing the schools we should work together as one to make more progress instead of like "oh, let's separate you guys because that way there'll be less chaos." I think we should have learned to work together as a whole like every other high school…It stops you from being involved with other schools or meeting other people from the other little Lockes. (Melissa interview 2)

Students are social beings and need the proper forum in order to meet their social needs. Isolation prevents students from meeting their social needs and from interacting with other students. The students felt this pain and mourned the loss of the social lives they had at old Locke; they wanted to be together as a school.

Figure 17. Gates that isolate.

Jamilet photo essay

Loss of culture. Being isolated from the other schools and separated from one another, the culture of the school changed. Socially, the culture began falling apart as students were unable to interact with one another and there were no social activities in which the schools could participate. Concerning the separation and isolation, Chris discussed its effect on the Locke culture. "I think it hurts Locke culture. I think Green Dot destroyed it. We're not united and we're not a school. You can't separate us and expect us to be a school" (Chris interview 2). It changed the whole feeling of the school. Chris continued, "Socially it kind of sucks. You don't get to know too many people. It sucks that you don't have very many students; you don't get that high school vibe" (Chris interview 2).

Even though the school under old Locke was dismal and falling apart, the students loved the social atmosphere and the culture they created as a school; that changed under Green Dot:

> The worst thing is the culture. There isn't enough school spirit. Everybody is like "Locke sucks and they don't let me do anything. They don't let me have any freedom . . .There isn't much social activities and students aren't that enthusiastic about social activities. (Melissa interview 2)

> I don't know what's going on, speaking of activities. They don't advertise football games. At old Locke, they'd come on the radio and say we're doing this and this, but now there's nothing . . . Sometimes they are too focused on us getting our education, which isn't bad. Sometimes we need a break. Like having a school dance or a rally; just doing something together as a school. (Shawna interview 1)

Not only did the culture change, but also Green Dot offered fewer activities for the students in new Locke. Where there were once activities and excitement, there was now nothing to help the students feel as though they were a part of the school and to be involved. Green Dot did not allow the students the opportunity to interact with one

another or to build a school culture. Both Shawna and Melissa grieved these social

changes:

> Our activities and social activities, to me, we don't have any; it's all about learning. When it was LAUSD, when we had a game, it was announced throughout the whole week. Students would put a lot into that game. Now, you don't really hear about it; you don't know about it. Since Green Dot, I've only been to one game. I don't feel like we have a lot of spirit. (Shawna interview 2)

> I think there are less activities.   I don't know if it's financial or anything but in the 9th grade, I remember there being a lot of activities on the stage. There were a lot of activities that would get people involved.   Now, my senior year, I feel like that hardly happens. It's not that good of a senior year. It went from there being a lot of activities, not just for seniors, to there being activities just for seniors every once in a while to there being none. (Melissa interview 2)

Overall, the culture of the school changed and the social atmosphere went from

lively to nonexistent. The students mourned the loss of their formal social lives and

hoped for more activities and a more student-friendly social culture. Although Green Dot

helped in certain areas, it did not meet some of the basic needs of the students. Melissa's

comments voiced the overall feeling of the students, "I think the disadvantages [of the

takeover] outweigh the advantages" (Melissa interview 2).

New Locke

Socially, the students did not have the same opportunities under new Locke.

Where their social freedoms had flourished under old Locke, they all but died under new

Locke. The students lacked both activities in their school and interactions with other

schools. The student feelings concerning the social atmosphere of new Locke fell into a

couple of different themes. The first theme was that their senior year had been

disappointing. A second theme that emerged was the feeling of being pushed out. A third theme under new Locke was the need to have more students around.

Disappointing senior year. In their senior year, the students felt that they did not have the activities that a senior class should have. They felt that they were not making memories and having the social activities that would help them to remember their senior year. Shawna was quite saddened by the lackluster senior year given to the students. She lamented, "I have good grades this year, but I haven't been having good memorable moments" (Shawna interview 1). She, like most seniors, wanted her last year of high school to be memorable. She, along with the rest of the students had been quite disappointed. They explained:

> We don't have that many senior activities and there isn't that much enthusiasm. I think that it's the teachers, administration, and Green Dot's fault. If we had activities, the students would participate and feed off of each other's' enthusiasm. (Melissa interview 3)

> We don't really get any options. Like for senior night, we're going to six flags instead of Disney and we're not too happy about it. (Jamilet interview 3)

> Socially, it kind of sucks . . . Green Dot has destroyed all social activities. I have a sense they don't want us together. (Chris interview 2)

> There's no school spirit. (Shawna interview 1)

Sadly, this was the manner in which these students were going to remember their senior year. They had been isolated and given limited activities.

Loneliness. In addition to lacking activities, they felt lonely because of the small number of students at the school. Since the takeover, their small school had been dwindling down until there was just one small grade left. They were both isolated from

the other schools and small in numbers. These circumstances created a lonely

environment for these seniors to finish their last year of high school at Locke. Jamilet

described the social atmosphere in this way: "This senior year, it is definitely lonely. It's

just 12th graders and not even all of them are here" (Jamilet interview 3). Chris

contrasted this new atmosphere with the way it was under old Locke:

> Chris: There were a lot of people. Me and my friends used to have walk
> arounds and go and walk around and check people out during
> lunch. Now you can't walk around. What are you going to go see,
> the bushes? It was fun. It was very social. There were people
> around, you didn't need Facebook. Now we got to get on all these
> social networks and find people. But back then, there were people.
> (Focus group)

Jamilet also described the contrast between old Locke and new Locke. She said, "We

were all together and the school was really packed. I remember when I first got here, I

actually got lost. I wouldn't get lost now because it's so small" (Jamilet interview 3).

The students were lonely in their senior year. During a time when there should have been

celebrating and excitement, there was loneliness and limited interactions (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Empty hallways.

Jamilet photo essay

Role models. Being lonely and isolated were not choices that the students made.

In fact, they would have loved to share the campus with other students. They

remembered having older students to look up to as 9th-graders. They wanted role models

and to be role models for other students. It was sad to them that they had nobody to look

up to them as role models. Chris explained:

> During my 9th grade year, we had people to look up to. As a senior, you
> want people to look up to you. We don't get that right now. We don't get
> that attention. We're just seen as a leftover school. (Chris interview 2)

Even though they had experienced high school and had had great experiences to share

with the students, nobody was there with whom to share these experiences. Melissa

explained that it would be good to meet students from the other Lockes, "because you

could give them advice and sometimes you're going through similar things that you went through at that age" (Melissa interview 2). It is beneficial to have students teach their peers to be students. Chris had a class with older students who taught him how to behave in high school. He explained, "The first week of school, I realized I'm not a kid anymore. I'm younger than everybody else, but I don't have to act like a kid" (Chris interview 3).

Two of the students even discussed mentoring programs that would be beneficial to Locke and the surrounding schools that had younger students. Melissa explained how such a program could help younger students. She said, "I think the school would benefit from a program because students would be more on track and they'd take it seriously and it would completely change how the school does on tests and grades" (Melissa interview 2). Jamilet also felt that a mentoring program would help students. She said, "I know other schools have programs where 12th graders mentor 9th graders. I think that would be a nice program to have here. It can't really happen here" (Jamilet interview 2).

Pushing LAUSD students out. In addition to feeling lonely, and having a dismal senior year, the students felt as though they were being rushed out of the school. They felt that because they were the last of the LAUSD students, Green Dot wanted to hurry them out of the school. Chris explained, "I think right now we aren't paid attention to. We're the last class of LAUSD, let's get them out of here" (Chris interview 1). With the shrinking school, lackluster activities, and lack of school spirit, the students began to feel that the school would like them to graduate soon and move on. Melissa said:

> It makes me feel like they're just trying to get this year over with. They're just trying to get these kids out. We'll have some activiites for them but

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not really fun activities that don't require to pay for a package. Like for grad night. There aren't really any activities except for those [paid senior activities]. (Melissa interview 2)

Graduation should be an exciting time for seniors, who should be relishing the memories they created in high school. However, the students adopted the same attitude that the school had shown them and wanted to leave as quickly as possible. At one point they had loved the school, but now they just wanted out. Chris said about Locke students, "[T]hey changed from being excited about being in high school to just wanting to get out. Good luck to the rest of the Lockes, but we're out of here" (Chris interview 3). During the focus group, the students discussed this desire to leave:

> Shawna: We shouldn't want to leave so much. We've been here since 9th grade. This is our school.

> Daniel: This is like my home; we've been here so long. But now we're like we want to get the hell out of here; there's nothing here for us. That special feeling has been taken away from us.

> Shawna: When we leave, there is going to be no more Locke.

> Daniel: There will be other schools and students saying we're Locke. You're not Locke. There's no more Locke. You're just a piece of Locke. (Focus group)

The students felt that they were being pushed out and now wanted to leave the school. It was sad that the students were feeling rushed so that Green Dot could continue with its takeover project.

Conclusion

Socially, the school had digressed from old Locke to new Locke. The students felt separated, isolated, like they were being pushed out of the school. On top of that, the students felt that the school had lost the culture it had once had and that it no longer had

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the activities that old Locke had had. Meeting the social needs of the students was one of the major casualties of the takeover.

Personal Impact of the Takeover

The takeover affected many of the students' personal lives. The personal life of students included how it affected their families, how it affected their future, and how it affected the time they spent after school. Although many elements remained the same, the students explained some of the changes and similarities of the takeover in terms of how it had impacted their personal lives.

Old Locke

Many of the students reported that Locke under LAUSD had not given them the education they needed and would not prepare them for college. The education that the students were receiving was inadequate and they knew that they would not be able to progress in college with the little preparation Locke was giving to them:

> [If Locke remained under LAUSD] I don't think I'd feel as confident to think about going to college. I probably would have just gone to a two year. I don't think I would have had the A-G requirements. (Jamilet interview 2)
>
> [If it was still LAUSD] I don't think I would have made it as far as I did. (Daniel interview 2)
>
> I just think that even though it's not much and it's still not top quality education, I still think that a lot of kids have benefited from it in comparison to if it stayed the old Locke. I think that if it would have remained old Locke, a lot of kids would have lost their way. (Melissa interview 2)

The students not only felt unprepared for life after high school, but they also felt inadequately prepared to interact during high school. The atmosphere was such that

students did not feel that they could succeed in the classroom or be confident in who they were as students:

> [In 9th grade] I always cared about school but I knew that the quality of the teaching wasn't that good. I felt that I got good grades because I always did my work in comparison to those who didn't do it . . . [If Locke had stayed under LAUSD] I wouldn't have felt so prepared to take on another step. I think that I would have been more insecure because when I was in the 9th grade, even though I knew the answer to the question, I wouldn't say it. I'd just keep the answer in my head. Then the teacher would say the answer because nobody else would and I thought, I should have said that. Now, I feel much more confident in myself. Even if it's wrong, I still attempt to answer it. (Melissa interview 2)

The students knew that their future would be determined in part by their preparation during high school. They knew that if they were not prepared for life beyond high school, their opportunities in life would be limited, especially concerning college. The students felt that old Locke under LAUSD had not prepared them in any way for life during or after high school.

After school. Under old Locke, none of the students reported staying after school for academic purposes. Melissa stated, "I don't ever remember staying after school for a class in the 9th grade, even if I did need help" (Melissa 2). However, some of the students reported staying after school for social reasons and sports.

Takeover.

The takeover changed a few areas in the personal lives of the students. One area was with the interactions between their family and the school. They also discussed how the takeover changed them personally and as a student. The students then discussed how much time they spent at Locke after school.

Family. Overall, students felt that Green Dot had affected their families in a

positive manner. They felt that their families were more involved and more informed

about the school and the how the students were progressing. One way in which Green

Dot got the parents more involved was by requiring them to log a certain amount of hours

at the school. Melissa explained, "The parents are more involved. Even though it's

mandatory, still it's a good way to get parents know what's going on in school" (Melissa

interview 1).

The view that parents had had of Locke had changed also, according to the

students. The parents saw the school much more positively and were more confident

about their children spending time at the school:

> My mom has a different view of how she sees the school. She used to say
> don't stay after school and she says as long as you're in class. She's more
> okay with the class. It's brighter; it's not as dark as it used to be. (Daniel
> interview 2)

> My mom liked the takeover. But she wasn't so sure about the uniforms
> because she had to buy me new clothes. She liked the fact that GD took
> over. When she came up, she noticed a big difference. Then she saw that
> they sent her letters and telling her what they were going to do. She even
> noticed her teachers are very nice. (Jamilet interview 2)

> I think that my family is more involved in my school and of me of how
> I'm doing in school. I'm not sure if the takeover has affected them that
> much because they've always cared about my grades. (Melissa interview
> 2)

The school spent more time informing parents of their child's progress. The

school sent out grades and informational packets. The school also had an automated

system that called home when students were not in class. This system had been both

positive and negative for students and their relationship with their parents. For example,

Shawna gave an example of when she was incorrectly marked absent and was in trouble with her parents after the school's automated system called home. Shawna explained:

> My parents are more informed by leaving voicemails and calling . . . If I was late or absent, they would call my mom and my mom would get mad at me. She would believe them more that she would believe me. They should make sure they have good evidence before they call parents. I only had one class that they said I was absent and we had a sub. She was upset. I wasn't absent. I had perfect attendance. (Shawna interview 1).

Although mistakes had been made with the automated phone system, overall the parents were grateful for the information that they received from the school. According to the students, the parents felt more positively toward the school. Green Dot helped parents be more involved and have access to information about their children.

Personal changes. With changes in the academic atmosphere, the structure, and the rules, the students also began changing. Some of the students described being inspired and changing as a result of the takeover. Daniel was inspired by the takeover to apply its lessons beyond school and into his own person life. He said, "I would take the new school as a challenge to not only improve my education but my life also" (Daniel interview 1). With the new teachers, students realized that learning was important and that education can open doors. The students discussed these changes:

> The way things are structured and the way things are done and the expectation of the teacher has helped me be more committed and more responsible and I have high hopes for myself because the teachers are encouraging and teachers come with the takeover. (Melissa interview 2)

> In the 9th grade, I was kind of scared. Then I felt like I had a lot of dreams and now I have a lot of goals, and they are two different things . . . I think I am more committed to school and more responsible. I know that I need to get things done. (Melissa interview 2)

The takeover has inspired me to enjoy learning. Before, I used to think that learning was so boring . . . I definitely feel more confident and I am proud that I took part in this big change (Jamilet interview 2).

Most of the students saw this change as an opportunity to change themselves. With new teachers and new opportunities, they found ways to create new plans and change themselves. These students definitely improved under Green Dot and found ways to succeed in school and in life.

However, not all students enjoyed the manner in which these changes came. One of the students interviewed felt that the changes were being forced on the students. Shawna described the forced changes: "I would change the way Green Dot wants us to change. They try to make us change with their rules. You get tickets if you come to school late a certain amount of days" (Shawna interview 1). Shawna also felt that Green Dot did not understand the students' background and where they came from every day. She explained it in this way:

> They are trying to change us as students, but they need to look at what we go home to. Out of school is different than when you're in school and I don't know if they understand that. Outside of school, it's challenging; you don't know what you're going to run into; stuff that teenagers do, like drugs. When we walk into school, we have to change into a person they want us to be. When we go back outside we change again. So it's like getting dressed three times a day. You have to change your appearance. When you come to Locke, you have to show perfection. You have to be respectful. When you go out there, sometimes you don't get respect. It's bad that students have to change to come to Locke because maybe they don't know who they are; they have to keep changing so they're confused. (Shawna interview 1)

She continued:

> I feel like I was forced. It made me feel kind of bad in a way because we had to do a lot. It's like they squeezed all the orange juice out of me. I feel empty. They don't think about how we're going to feel. They just

focus on I did my job I did what I'm supposed to do. But what about us? How are we supposed to feel? (Shawna interview 1)

Although many students enjoyed the opportunity to change and the inspiration of the teachers and takeover, at least one of the students felt these changes were forced. Not all of the Green Dot changes were easy for the students.

After school. The students were split about staying after school. The activity determined whether a student would stay after school. Unanimously, students stayed after school more for academic purposes; students stayed after school less for activities or for watching sports. The only exception was when a student was in a sport, and most of those declined once Green Dot took over. The students explained:

> I spend more time at Locke since the takeover. Sometimes for a club or to make up an assignment. I didn't spend time after school at old Locke; it was chaotic and I just wanted to get out of there. (Jamilet interview 2)

> I spend way more time at Locke than I did before because I have AP classes and I need help. (Melissa interview 2)

> Do more work, stay after school. The time I spend in school is no longer enough. I have to stay even longer after school to learn the basics. In math there are some things that I completely do not understand and I cannot do the things that I would normally do after school. (Daniel interview 2)

As with all changes at the school, not all of the students saw the takeover positively in this area. Shawna felt that the social aspect of staying after school had disappeared. She said, "I spend less time at Locke after the takeover. I don't feel excited at all. I feel lonely. It's like no one is here. My friends aren't here. It's just lonely" (Shawna interview 1). Chris felt that the takeover had not affected the time he spent at

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Locke after school. He said, "I'd be here after school whether or not Green Dot were here or not" (Chris interview 2).

Of the five students, three felt that the takeover had positively affected the time they spent after school at Locke. The other two saw this area negatively or neutral. Some after school activities were enhanced, while others disappeared.

New Locke

There were many ways, both positive and negative, that students were affected in their personal lives as a result of the takeover and as a result of their year under old Locke. The students came to realize that Locke affected who they were as people. Locke had become a part of who they were. In the focus group, the students discussed how Locke had affected them. They said:

> Chris: I just miss the old Locke. We had older people to look to. It was great socially. The school was alive and now the school is going to be dead after us. There's going to be a new Locke, but it's not going to be the same. It's not OG Locke no more. It used to be great.

> Shawna: I'm going to miss Locke too.

> Daniel: Now we can say Locke is now a part of it. We can say what we want about the school, but it's a part of us. (Focus group)

The last remark by Daniel is important—one of the most important quotations in the data collection. Daniel explained how Locke was a part of them as students. Whether Locke was a good school or a bad school was irrelevant to the students; it was part of who they are. In the research, finding the students being critical of Green Dot was easy; it was more difficult finding instances in which they degraded Locke as a school or spoke negatively about their own personal experiences there—because, as Daniel put it:

they are the school and the school is a part of who they are. When they explained the

negatives of Locke, they were describing elements of their own lives and who they were.

Thus, it was difficult for them to truly hate the school or to find negative things to say

about the school because it would have been a reflection on them as people. There was

always somebody or something to blame for the events that had happened and the

condition of the school instead of putting the full blame on the school and its students.

This view of the students as a part of the school and the school as part of the

students was further emphasized in responses to the question, "If you could go back in

time, would you have chosen to go to Locke, or would you have chosen a different school

to attend your four years?" (Focus group interview question #7). The students

resoundingly said no. Not one of them would go back and change the four years that they

had spent at Locke. To want to change those four years would have been the same as

wanting to change who they were as people. These students were shaped by the events

and time they had spent at Locke High School. They would not have changed who they

had become as a result of not having been adequately prepared for college, or having had

a less rigorous curriculum and fewer social activities in which to participate.

Still, although none of the students would have changed the high school they had

attended, most of them would not have wanted a sibling to attend Locke. Four of the five

students agreed that they would not want to send a younger sibling to the school they had

attended (Focus group). The one student that would have sent a younger sibling to Locke

already had a sibling at one of the Locke incubator schools.

It was interesting to see that the students valued the experiences that had helped shape them into the young people that they had become—even if those experiences had taken place in a failing high school. However, they also understood the limits of the education they had received and saw that they could have been shaped in a different way had the school been better. They hoped for more for their younger siblings. They would not change who they were, but would not have their younger siblings go down the same path; they can do better.

Community

One of the themes that emerged was the relationship that Locke had with the community. Although Locke had been a part of the Watts community since 1967, the students did not feel a connection between the school and the community. Earlier, Shawna explained how difficult it was to come from the surrounding community and attend Locke. She explained how people needed to change in order to make it at Locke. The community from which the students came was not represented within the school walls. Concerning the takeover, Shawna said, "The takeover is emotional for me. Especially when we talk about how they separated us and didn't let the community be a part of it" (Shawna interview 2). Chris explained the conflict between the school and the community in this way, "The school thinks the community is part of the problem. The school doesn't want anything to do with the community" (Chris interview 1).

The photo essays poignantly depict this conflict between school and community. The students show gates, locks, and black plastic separating the school from the community. Chris explained in his photo essay (Figure 19):

Not only is our school surrounded by a plethora gates but now Green Dot has put this black tarp on the gates; we can't see outside, they can't see inside. The photo says it all but let me explain a bit more. The school is "scared" of the community. Gangs and stuff are what they fear going into the school they say but they don't understand that the gangs are made up of ex Locke students. So they treat us like experiments in this LOCKEd up place. (Chris photo essay)

Figure 19. Locking the community out.

Chris photo essay

The next photo, by Jamilet, shows how separated the school was from the neighborhood. She wrote in her photo essay:

I think Locke does not belong to the surroundings because it is more under control and there is not that much violence in the school. I think the only reason why Locke is part of the community is because the students that attend the school live there. But they go looking for opportunities, progress and work hard so they could accomplish their dreams. This could also make it separate at the same time. (Jamilet photo essay)

It is interesting to note the different values between the school and the community in Jamilet's photo essay. One reason they are separate, according to Jamilet, is the different values and opportunities between the two. These values and opportunities also put the school and neighborhood in conflict with one another. The last picture is Daniel's (Figure 21), which once again shows a police car separating the school from the community.

Figure 20. Do not enter

Jamilet photo essay

It is easy to see that the students were personally affected by Locke High School. They were shaped by their time at the school and the takeover. The students are a part of the

school and the school became a part of who they are. The students also believed that the community and school did not interact and that the school was in opposition to the community surrounding it (Figures 20 and 21).

Figure 21 Protecting the school or neighborhood?
Daniel photo essay

Conclusion

In this section, the students showed that they were critical thinkers who could analyze their position in a school takeover. From the chaos of old Locke to the loneliness of new Locke, they described their experiences, stories, perceptions, and how the takeover impacted their academic, social, and personal lives. These experiences which they have shared have helped to describe the inequalities of their school experience. Along with the descriptions, they explained how Green Dot, or any other organization

taking over a high school, could create more meaningful change for the students. The

next chapter presents an analysis of the findings and includes suggestions emerging from

the results.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The methodology of this research of a charter school takeover allowed me to delve deeply into the voice, perspectives, and stories from students and to discover their experiences in their school. Accessing their voice, I was able to find a window into their feelings—often mixed—in the areas of experiences, perceptions, stories, and impact of the takeover on their social, academic, and personal life. The findings in these areas helped create a picture of the successes and failings of Green Dot Public Schools concerning the takeover. The findings, presented in Chapter Four, are discussed in this chapter. The findings are organized using six research areas: experiences, perceptions, stories, social impact of the takeover, academic impact of the takeover, and personal impact of the takeover.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather, examine, and analyze the opinions and perceptions of students involved in the takeover of a public high school by a charter school management organization in the Watts community of Los Angeles. To gather these opinions and perceptions, I used a qualitative methodology, which included the creation of photo essays, and conducted in-depth interviews and facilitated a focus group. Through this data collection, I captured the student voice and their opinions and perceptions on the takeover of their high school.

Major Findings

This section on the findings is divided by themes that were found as a result of analyzing the data. Based on what students wrote, placed in their pictures, explained in interviews, and discussed in the focus group, some themes emerged that are discussed in this section.

Disenfranchisement

After spending time sifting through the photographs and responses offered by the student participants, I clearly understood that they felt disenfranchised by the takeover. The students discussed how they had had no substantive role in the charter takeover and, as a result, were powerless to the changes taking place within their high school. Although it was touted to help the students of Locke High School, the takeover neither took into consideration student voice nor offered the opportunity for students to actively participate in choosing the high school that was being created. Each student described the neglect of their voice in the project and a lack of solicited involvement in critical areas of needed change at Locke. In the end, they felt that the only option they had had with the takeover was to continue attending Locke under Green Dot or to attend another school, which for many families was not a reasonable or possible option. Instead of empowering the students and offering them educational choices and opportunities for involvement, the takeover left the students feeling disenfranchised with no opportunity to choose the structure and shape of their new school.

Not only were students disenfranchised during and after the takeover, but also the community felt similar levels of disenfranchisement. Students commented about how the

school and the community were separate and how Green Dot worked to maintain that

separation between school and community for myriad of reasons. The students took

pictures showing the barriers between the community and the school and how the

community was essentially locked out of the campus. Under Green Dot, the school

lacked a viable PTA or any other form of student-centered, community-inclusive parent

organization. This dynamic was compounded by the fact that the facilitators of the

takeover had solicited no direct involvement with parents and families. The initial

exploration to transform Locke into a charter school was initiated by a teacher-led

petition (Rubin, 2007b). The vote to hand Locke over to Green Dot was conducted by

the LAUSD school board (Rubin & Blume, 2007). Although there may have been an

informational meeting for parents, at no point did parents have a voice in the takeover or

the ability to choose the final outcome of the school; this disregard created ripples of

concern for many students and their families.

Notably, a class and racial divide exists in the takeover of public schools in Los

Angeles. In more affluent areas, parents and teachers have led transformations of their

schools and kept autonomy locally. For example, Pacific Palisades High School and

Granada Hills Charter High School have both left LAUSD and now function as

independent charter schools led by a committee with local members. However, in

working class areas, such as Watts and South Los Angeles, LAUSD has given schools to

outside Charter Management Organizations. For example Locke High School, Jordan

High School, and Clay Middle School were given to Green Dot; these three schools are

located within a few miles of one another in working class neighborhoods that are

predominately Latina/o and African American. Other examples include Manual Arts High School and Muir Middle School, which were given to MLA Partner Schools. In 2011, LAUSD chose to give away seven high-needs schools in working class neighborhoods to Charter Management Organizations, while giving a high-performing school in an affluent area to a district and teacher-led group (Blume, 2011a). In giving these schools to outside charter organizations, the district disenfranchises communities of color and working class neighborhoods while granting more autonomy to affluent communities. This disenfranchisement of communities of color is a problem that continues beyond Locke and into the Los Angeles area. Such clear racial delineation of school access and autonomy across racial and economic boundaries further problematizes the scope of charter school takeovers in high-needs, urban communities as an issue of race and socioeconomics versus one of equitable education and access to higher education.

The students and community of Locke were not only disenfranchised, but they were also pawns in an educational and political game — with implications far beyond the scope of their community. As Green Dot attempted to grow on a national level, the school gained national attention in newspapers, books, movies, television shows, magazines, radio programs, Internet pages, and any other imaginable medium. Some of the students commented on how Green Dot benefitted from the takeover and from the national media attention the school received as a result. Although the takeover was initiated to help students, they had had no part in the plan. They were not asked to offer their opinions and reactions regarding the changes, and most importantly they were not

asked to actively participate in changes that would directly affect their well-being at Locke. One might offer that it seems counterintuitive to take over a school to help students, and then not involve them in the takeover process or ask how their educational needs could best be met. With no involvement in the takeover process, the students felt that their time at Locke was difficult and similar to an experiment. Melissa said, "It feels like we're a trial" (Focus group). They felt that they were test-students in Green Dot's takeover project.

Student Ability to Make Choices

Another major theme that arose was the loss of choices for students. With Green Dot, students felt that they had limited options and that they were given few options to make decisions for themselves and to determine the outcomes of their own education. As stated previously, the students had no option in determining the shape and direction of the school during the takeover, but the implications of this loss of choice went beyond the takeover. The students felt that they had lost opportunities to gain essential critical thinking skills and to determine their own education. Without opportunities to think through decision making, these students' critical thinking skills were not growing in ways that they could have and should have.

The students discussed the simplicity of the new rules and how these rules were demeaning to them as high school students. From arrows on the floor to directions in the restroom explaining how to properly use the restroom, the students felt that the overabundance of simple rules was insulting and limiting to their growth. They even discussed how these rules attempted to prepare them for menial work in the future where

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they would have to follow rules and directions instead of being the leaders, managers, and innovators who created rules and gave instructions. The rules, in essence, were a reminder of their place in life and served as a tool of social reproduction (Chris photo essay). Instead of creating an environment that promoted good decision-making and critical thinking skills, the school existed as a jail-like environment limiting the growth of these skills.

Instead of opportunities that allowed the students to proactively determine the educational outcomes they desired, the students played a passive role within the school and decision-making processes there. The school lacked an organized student body where students could participate and help make decisions as a school. They were limited in class choices and in opportunities to become a part of the school and the decision-making process. Although some teachers and individuals had attempted to solicit student participation, such efforts were inconsistent and usually not well known across the school. Decision-making was always out of reach of the students, as was made clear from the beginning of the takeover as the students played no role in the changes taking place.

School Community

Another area in which the students felt loss was in the community; the students lost the community they had once known at Locke. The isolation from other schools added to the dismantling of the school community they had come to know. Without this community, school spirit decreased.

Although it was clearly a dangerous place where learning was limited and student achievement was not valued, old Locke did have a proud history and school spirit. The school was well known for its band, which often played at sports events and pep rallies. Chris described the school as being "[L]ike any high school shown in TV shows, like some type of Glee type of stuff. It was a great school . . . That was old Locke (Chris interview 1). According to all of the students, the school lost this excitement and the vibe it once had. The band no longer interacted with the school, no longer played at games, and was no longer the pride of the school. The homecoming parade and traditions no longer took place. In spite of all of the problems that old Locke had had, the culture, spirit, history, and pride were an important part of the student body. With the takeover, this climate deteriorated and the students felt alienated from one another and from the school. The community that the students once felt was now gone.

Isolation

Another problem that the students encountered was increasing isolation. When the students started as 9th-graders, there were 2,613 students. By their senior year, only about 300 students attended their small school. As the students returned after the takeover, they found themselves both isolated from the rest of the school and separated from one another; the LLCA was split into two schools. Physically, the students who had come from old Locke were housed in a building separated from the rest of the school. They felt quarantined as gates, locks, tarps, and dividers isolated them from the rest of the students and small schools. They felt contaminated as Green Dot attempted to build a new culture with the incubator schools by ensuring that the former LAUSD students were

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not a part of these schools. Although students were at the other small schools on campus,

they were separated. On top of the diminished population of the school and the

separation from other small schools, the students felt that they were being pushed out of

the school. As the last students at Locke under LAUSD, they felt that they were being

rushed to finish. In their senior year—two years into the takeover—they reported a

dismal atmosphere with limited activities and no school spirit or culture. The social life

they had enjoyed as freshman was gone and they felt they were at the school simply to

learn. Their senior year felt lackluster with few activities or opportunities to make

memories with their friends. Melissa explained in an interview:

> It makes me feel like they're just trying to get this year over with.
> They're just trying to get these kids out. We'll have some activities for
> them but not really fun activities that don't require them to pay for a
> package. (Melissa interview 2)

Melissa continued with this theme in a later interview, stating, "But I feel this year

they're like, you're leaving, this is the last class, let's get this over with" (Melissa

interview 3). They wanted to feel important in their senior year and not forgotten or

rushed out of the school so that the incubator schools could thrive. These students felt an

increased isolation, as their school's hallways were empty and their school culture lost.

The school they once knew had changed without their input and was now pushing them

out.

School as Jail

    With the takeover, the students felt that the school had begun to feel like a jail.

For example, the students felt that the school was similar to a police state because of the

newly hired security company that carried guns, handcuffs, batons, and pepper spray.

Although the new security company kept the school safer, that safety came at the cost of the quality of the overall environment of the school. In addition to the security, the permanently locked gates, the barriers, and the fence coverings added to the jail appearances. The paths the students were forced to take and the paths they were not allowed to take increased this jail-like feeling. Even the physical facilities seemed jail-like in their quality. From dirty water fountains to broken bathroom doors, the school was not of the quality these students deserved.

Disappointment

Many changes took place in the school, but the students felt that the changes had not occurred in the areas they felt were important and that the changes themselves were not enough. For example, the students discussed the quality of the teachers. They felt that they had great teachers, but that the education offered at the school was not preparing them for college. When the students returned to the school after their freshman year, they discussed the limited changes that had occurred there. The students felt that they deserved more from the takeover. They deserved an education that was equitable to students in other communities and an education that would prepare them for college. They deserved facilities that were not disgusting or broken but that would be equivalent to facilities found in other schools. Overall, the takeover was a giant disappointment for the students. Although new Locke was better than old Locke, it was not enough. Though the school did not experience another riot and was safer, it was still not the school the students had hoped for or that the students deserved. The students felt that Green Dot did not fulfill its promises and did not meet their expectations. Given the social cost to the

students and the changes they were forced to endure, the outcome was not favorable. The cost to them as students and the school they had loved far outweighed the benefits they saw in their school.

Normalization of Violence

One major problem at the school was the normalization of a negative environment. For example, at old Locke, students became inured to the violence. When it did occur, violence was normal, an ordinary daily event. The students discussed the riot that had taken place on May 9, 2008. It is interesting to note how much they downplayed the riot. They enjoyed telling the story and they all had individual stories to tell about the riot, but it was just another event—the students downplayed the size, scale, and effects of the riot. Though it was *the* major event in their freshman year at Locke, they did not harbor negative feelings or resentment about the riot. This response could come from the normalization of violence in their environment or as a way to counter the manner in which the news media exposed and exaggerated the story. The students felt that the media blew the story out of proportion, bringing negative attention to Locke (Chris interview 1, Daniel interview 1, Jamilet interview 1, Jamilet interview 3). The students seemed to have become normalized to violence at school; each of the them described having watched some form of violence at school.

Segregation

Another social justice issue that faced the school was segregation. The school was 100% Latina/o and African American, an increasingly large problem for charter schools attempting to work with underserved communities. One study showed that the

growth of charter schools has helped increase school segregation (Blume, 2010a).

Although Locke's segregation problem was inherited, Green Dot created a second

segregation problem within the school. By separating the former LAUSD students from

the rest of the school, Green Dot made the students feel like they were being segregated.

Chris and Shawna, in fact, labeled the separation of their school as segregation (Chris

interview 3 and Shawna interview 1). The change created separate schools based on

upon when students had started going to Locke. This divide was experienced as a great

injustice by the students, as they were not only separated from the schools, but they were

also made to feel inferior by this act of quarantining them from the incubator schools.

Although it may not have been able to control the already segregated school it took over,

Green Dot could have lessened the problem by not quarantining the students who had to

suffer under old Locke.

Student Connection to the School

One realization I had during this process was that the students felt directly

connected to the school. Although they had many complaints about old Locke, the

takeover, and new Locke, they loved their experiences and the way that the school shaped

them. They felt that their personal history was tied to the recent history of Locke. They

were slow to criticize the school that had helped shape them into the people they had

become. The students were a living history of the school before and after the takeover.

In stark contrast to the students' connection to the school was the school's

connection to the community. Even though the students came from the community that

surrounded Locke, all of the students reported that the school isolated itself from the

community. Locke had emerged from the violence of the Watts riots and the surrounding

neighborhood; however, Green Dot attempted to distance itself from the community. If

the eight-foot fence around the school were not enough, Green Dot added black plastic so

that the community was unable to see into the school and the school was unable to look

out on the community. In separating itself from the community from which these

students came, Green Dot isolated the school, which in turn impacted the students that

went to the school. Shawna made this important observation:

> They are trying to change us as students, but they need to look at what we
> go home to. Out of school is different than when you're in school and I
> don't know if they understand that. Outside of school, it's challenging;
> you don't know what you're going to run into; stuff that teenagers do, like
> drugs. When we walk into school, we have to change into a person they
> want us to be. When we go back outside we change again. So it's like
> getting dressed three times a day. You have to change your appearance.
> When you come to Locke, you have to show perfection. You have to be
> respectful. When you go out there, sometimes you don't get respect. It's
> bad that students have to change to come to Locke because maybe they
> don't know who they are; they have to keep changing so they're confused.
> (Shawna interview 1)

It was difficult for the students to attend a school that did not acknowledge the culture

from which they came or the community that shaped them. Shawna felt as though she

was leading two separate lives—one inside the gates of the school and another outside of

those gates. Though teachers may have taught with culturally relevant curriculum and

attempted to address the students' needs, the structure of the school and the attitude of

Green Dot created a vast chasm between life in school and life outside of school, which

the students struggled to navigate.

Takeover as Colonization

Another interesting issue to consider was the similarity between the takeover of high-needs schools and colonialism. To use Green Dot's takeover of Locke as an example, one will notice many of the similarities. Oxford Dictionaries (2011) has defined colonialism as, "The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically" (para. 1). The following paragraph will attempt to outline some of these similarities.

Although Green Dot and Locke were not alien powers, the home office was located in downtown Los Angeles and the school was in Watts. Thus, the political power of the school resided not at the school, nor even near the school, but rather in a different area of the city. The takeover, not initiated by students, parents, or the community, was in fact, similar to a colonial takeover. The people of the school had no choice in being taken over or in how the shaping of the school would occur. The occupation of settlers is similar to the hiring process that came down from Green Dot's headquarters. From that office, they hired administration, teachers, and other faculty to run the school. Also of note were the racial differences between the colonizers and the colonized. At the time of the takeover, the president, CEO, chief academic officer, director of human resources, Locke cluster director, and principal, Veronica Coleman, were all White. This profile is in stark contrast to the population of the school at the time, which was 99.99% non-White. And, finally, the publicity Green Dot gained by taking over Locke and its capacity to generate revenue made the venture worth undertaking. While the analogy is

not exact, many similarities can be found between colonization and the takeovers of low-performing schools in high needs areas.

Recommendations

This section applies the results of the research findings to suggest recommendations to Charter Management Organizations involved with high school takeovers. Many of the recommendations are directed at Charter Management Organizations taking over schools. These recommendations emerge from the perceptions, experiences, and stories of students who had experienced a takeover themselves. The recommendations follow the format of the research findings and cover the following topics: experiences, perceptions, stories, social impact of the takeover, academic impact of the takeover, and personal impact of the takeover.

Experiences

Students need experiences at school. They need to have opportunities to be involved and opportunities to become active participants in their own education. This section discusses some of the opportunities for involvement that students could be given concerning the takeover of their school.

Role. Give students a role in the takeover. Let them take ownership in changing their own school. Find ways to allow them to participate in the changes that need to happen. Oftentimes, students see the problems best and know the changes that need to occur. Allow them to be a part of the planning and implementation of the changes that need to happen at the school. Do not disenfranchise the students out of their own school. They are a part of the school; make them a part of the changes. Allow them to be proud

of the school and of the changes that occur in a takeover. Learning is a partnership

between student and teacher; make the school a partnership between student and

management.

Voice. Allow students to have a voice dealing with the takeover. Students grow

when they are able to have a voice and think about the school. Students should be given

meaningful opportunities to voice their opinions, support, and critiques of the school and

the takeover plan. These opportunities should not end with the takeover but continue as

students progress through the school. Create a feedback loop so that the students have

the opportunity to have voice in their school and feel like valued members of the

community.

Choice. Give students choices. If students are going to be forced to wear a

uniform, allowing them to choose between options will help them feel important and a

part of the decision-making process. Forcing students to comply without giving them

options alienates them from school. Create a school environment in which students are

continually given options. Melissa complained that the mandated instructions and lack of

choice have hurt them. They need to practice good decision-making skills so that they

will be able to make good decisions for themselves in the future.

Completed plan for the takeover. The students felt like the takeover was a

plan-as-we-go operation. It seems simple, but when a school is taken over, ensure that

there is a long-term plan for the takeover. Overseeing organizations that give schools to

Charter Management Organizations should ensure there is a plan before the school is

handed over and the Charter Management Organization should have a completed plan

before it attempts to take over a school. Takeovers have happened before; research

should be completed to see what demands a school will have. Ensure that the students

know there is a plan in place so that they do not feel like they are part of a trial.

Make students a part of the takeover project. As the planning is taking place,

allow students to take part. Request and require student participation so that the students

feel invested in the takeover project. As the students become invested, they will take

ownership in the changes that need to happen at the school. Keeping students out of the

takeover alienates them from the school and the changes that need to happen.

Isolation of students from other small schools. One of the largest complaints

the students had was their isolation from the other schools. Although it is important to

create a new culture at the school, this change should not be at the expense of the current

students. The students felt quarantined and alone as the other schools took over their

school. If a school wants to use incubator schools in an effort to create a new school

culture, find ways for the students to interact. It is already difficult for the students to go

through the takeover; allow them to take part in the creation of the new schools. There

are meaningful ways for students to be a part of the larger school and to make them feel

valued. Inclusion helps create school spirit and the "high school vibe" that Chris spoke

about.

Separation of students from their friends and peers. Another complaint was

the separation students felt from friends and peers with whom they had attended school

the previous year. Even if a small school model is important and students need to have

separate schools, there are meaningful ways to allow students to interact with one another

and maintain their friendships. In being separated, students felt that they were losing

something important. A small school model can still be kept as long as the students are

still allowed the activities and opportunities to mingle, maintain, and create friendships.

Perceptions

These recommendations derived from the perceptions the students had of the

takeover. There are ways that a Charter Management Organization can help the students

view the takeover positively; this section offers a few suggestions about how to improve

students' perceptions of the takeover.

Make visible changes. The students complained that the school was almost the

same after the takeover. Allow the students to suggest what changes should be made and

then make them aware of those changes. Allow the students to know what types of

changes are going to be made and allow them to monitor the changes.

Takeover motivation. Explain why the school is being taken over; the reasons

for this radical change are not always obvious to the students. Allow them to know why

the school has new management and what the goals of this new management are. High

school students should know explicitly what is happening with their education. They are

old enough to be partners for change in their own education and to understand what is

happening to their school.

Provide adequate facilities. Students deserve to have functional facilities and a

decent school building. It is degrading to give students substandard facilities. Fine,

Torre, Burns, and Payne have written, "Buildings in disrepair are not, therefore, merely a

distraction; they are identity producing and self-defining" (2007, p. 811). It is not fair to

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give students substandard facilities and then expect them to produce exceptional work. Students deserve to have a beautiful building with functional facilities inside. To offer them anything else is unjust.

Allow the students freedom. The students complained about being controlled and not having freedom. Students need to be able to grow and make choices. Daniel commented that the school judged them by old Locke standards and not where they were then. As students exhibit positive decision making, allow them more opportunities to make choices. The students complained that a controlling atmosphere made them feel like they were in a jail. Make sure that they are not controlled in ways that might make them feel as though they were in a jail. Create an atmosphere of growth and trust.

Stories

Stories are important for students to have and to share. This section explains some ways in which students can be given opportunities to create memories and have stories to share.

Give the students experiences and allow them to create memories. Students need opportunities to be social in high school. Allow them opportunities and experiences that will help them create memories. Fieldtrips, after-school activities, assemblies, and sporting events are just a few ways that students can be given memorable experiences. There are also many ways that teachers can help students create memories during class time. Students want to feel important and they want to share experiences with their peers. It is important that they are given these opportunities.

Social Impact

The social life of a student is an important aspect of their high school experience. High schools should ensure that students are given positive social experiences and that they have a social atmosphere in which they can thrive.

Create a welcoming atmosphere where the students belong. Students should feel welcome at school. School is a place where they should feel that they belong and enjoy being. It is important that the school has an atmosphere that conveys to the students that they are important and integral. There should be exciting events for the students to look forward to and a social environment in which they can make friends and enjoy the company of others. Ensure that the students have time in their school day to interact with one another and to make and maintain important friendships.

Help students feel special. Students should never feel like a burden or that they are not welcome. The students at Locke felt that Green Dot wanted them to hurry and leave. Students belong at their school and need to feel that inclusion. Also, make sure the students have what they deserve. Seniors should feel special for graduating, especially if they were forced to endure a takeover. Make sure that they are appropriately rewarded for their hard work. Make sure that they feel welcome and not pushed out of the school to make room for others.

Surround the students with caring people. One of the complaints of the students was that they felt lonely. When a school is taken over, the students should not feel isolated, separated, or lonely. Allow the students to be surrounded by other students. Allow the students to be social. The students suggested the creation of mentoring

programs so that the older students can help younger students. Allow older students to be role models for younger students and to feel valued and important.

Academic Impact

Students in public education deserve an equitable education no matter their racial or socioeconomic background. Concerning takeovers, better is not always good enough. Charter Management Organizations should not allow better to suffice, but thrive to offer an equitable education.

Create a college-going atmosphere. Students deserve to be prepared for college. Creating classes and promoting rigor in the classrooms are two ways that will help prepare students for college. Students need to have the correct classes, test preparation, and counseling to help them in their journey to college. It is often said that college is not for everybody—allow the students that choice. If the students are behind on credits, need to make up classes, or have low test scores, extra help should be available to assist them.

Adequate course offerings. One problem with the small school model is limited class choice. The students in this study complained that there were not enough electives and that there were not enough advanced placement courses. It became worse as the school shrank and the number of classes and teachers diminished. The students did not choose the takeover, they should not have had limited class offerings because of it. Students should be offered classes whether they are on campus, at a local community college, or at neighboring small schools.

Ensure the students receive an equitable education. Students deserve an equitable education no matter where they are from or what their socioeconomic

background is. The students in this study felt that the education they received was less than what other students were receiving. Ensure that students receive a socially just education that is equitable to that of their peers.

Personal Impact

A takeover should affect a student personally in a positive manner. The school should help students turn their dreams into goals (Melissa interview 2). The personal impact should also improve how the students see the school and how they see themselves as a result of attending the school.

Be a part of the community. The students stated that Locke and the surrounding community were separate and did not interact. These two entities must interact appropriately, as the students are a part of the neighborhood the school serves. The community has much to offer the school and vice versa. Shawna discussed service projects the school could do for the community. In 1967, the school was created as a beacon of hope for the neighborhood; it should have continued to offer the neighborhood that hope.

Create a meaningful school. One of the biggest realizations I had during the course of this research was that the students held a deep sense of loyalty to the school. That commitment was because the school had become an important part of their lives. The school was a part of who they were. Because school helps to shape students, make school meaningful for them.   Create a school to be proud of and a school that will give meaning as the students grow and will shape who they are and who they will be.

Ensure that families feel welcome at the school. According to the students, Green Dot has done a good job of making families feel welcome at school. It is important to ensure that parents and families are invested in the education of students. Green Dot made phone calls, sent letters home, had parent nights, and invited parents on campus during school hours. Students need that investment outside of school as much as they do inside of school. The school should be doing what it can to ensure that parents and families are invested.

Conclusion

These suggestions, resulting from an analysis of the data collection, are a few ways that the takeover of a high school can improve. Whether the takeover has already occurred or is going to occur, a Charter Management Organization can improve a school in ways that are meaningful for the students. After all, the purpose of a takeover should be to offer students an opportunity to receive an equitable education at a high school that they feel is a positive place to attend.

Future Research

As a result of conducting this research, I have found additional areas where research could be conducted. These additional areas are separated by whom the study would be beneficial: charter schools and Charter Management Organizations, school districts granting charter schools and charter takeovers, and school reformers.

Charter Schools and Charter Management Organizations

One study that would be beneficial would examine the takeover from the perspective of the teachers who stayed during the takeover. As an important part of the

takeover and of the effectiveness of the takeover, the insight and perspectives of the teacher could benefit charter schools and Charter Management Organizations to help them understand the role teachers could and should have in a takeover. Such a study could also help charter schools find ways that teachers could more positively impact the school.

A second area of research that could be beneficial would involve an examination of perceptions of the takeover from students at the incubator schools at Locke. Although this research study focused on the students directly involved in the takeover, having experienced both old Locke and new Locke, it would be valuable to collect the perceptions of the students who began and continued their high school experiences at the incubator schools in the Locke takeover project. As students who were not a part of the takeover, these students could offer insights about their education post-takeover.

A third study that would benefit charter schools and Charter Management Organizations would be one that examined student satisfaction at high-needs charter high schools. Because many of the new charter organizations in the Los Angeles area are targeting high-needs areas, determining student satisfaction with these schools would be valuable. Such a study could consider the relevant social justice issues, as these charter schools target low socioeconomic areas and it is important that these students receive equitable educations and have positive educational experiences.

A study that examines the social atmosphere before, during, and after school takeovers could be important for charter schools so that they can ensure that students' needs are being met, not just academically, but also socially. In consideration of this

study, it would be valuable to determine if a negative social atmosphere is common in charter schools or if it was specific to this takeover.

School Districts Granting Charter Schools and Charter Takeovers

It would be beneficial to conduct a study that considered the collective perceptions of students, faculty, and community concerning the takeover of Locke High School. This present study examined only student perceptions, but a broader study that looked at the perceptions of all stakeholders would be beneficial in determining the overall success of the takeover. This information is important in determining whether districts should continue allowing Charter Management Organizations to takeover underperforming schools.

Another study that would be beneficial could conduct research examining the takeovers of similar high schools. This present study focused on just one high school and the student perceptions of the takeover. It would be beneficial to examine multiple high school takeovers to determine the overall effectiveness of allowing charter schools to manage underperforming high schools.

It would also be beneficial to conduct a quantitative study of Locke High School that examined attendance, test scores, graduation rates, and the number of students going to college. Such a study would examine the numbers before the takeover and after the takeover to determine the quality of the takeover. The data from this study should also be compared to schools in the district and around the state to determine if the quality of the education is comparable to the education other students around the state receive.

School Reformers

A study that would be beneficial to school reformers would determine whether the takeover of Locke High School affected students of different races in different ways. It is important to be racially conscious of school reform and to determine whether the effects of school reform are felt negatively or positively by students of different races. I found in this study that whereas the demographics stayed pretty much the same during the four years that the students were at Locke, more transfers took place in and out of the school for African American students. Only a few African American students qualified to participate in this study because they had not experienced all four years at Locke.

Another area that would benefit school reformers would be a study that examined and compared the degree to which students have a forum for their voice within charter schools and public schools. Students must be active participants in their education and have a forum for their voice. It would be beneficial to find examples of schools where students have had a forum for their voice and to develop ways that schools can ensure they are offering students a forum for their voice.

On the theme of student voice, it would be beneficial to conduct a student-led study of student perceptions of safety in high-needs schools. As this study has shown, schools can be violent places. It would be interesting to examine student perceptions of violence in their schools.

Another study that would benefit school reformers would be one that examined media accuracy in reporting on high-needs schools. As the students in this study concluded, the media does not cover the school and events at the school accurately.

It would be valuable to conduct a study that included a complete photo essay that documented before, during, and after the takeover of a high school. It would be valuable to see how a school changes over the course of a school takeover. A photo essay could help document the physical changes of the school, the perceived atmosphere of the school, and the overall quality of the school during the course of the takeover.

School reformers would also benefit from a study that compared facilities at high-needs charter schools. It would be valuable to determine whether Locke High School was the exception or the rule concerning the facilities at charter schools. It is important for students to have adequate facilities and a place that is safe and positive. It is important to ensure that all students, even those in high-needs schools and charter schools, have the quality of facilities they deserve.

A last study that would be beneficial to school reformers could examine course offerings in small charter schools in high-needs areas. The students at Locke High School felt that they were not given an equitable selection of course offerings that were preparing them for college and giving them a fair opportunity to learn. It would be interesting to determine whether such shortchanging is common in small charter schools and what could be done to increase the amount of classes students can take.

Conclusion

Several additional studies related to this project would be interesting and worthwhile. Some of these studies would be valuable in determining the quality of education that high-needs students receive and the quality of education that takeovers and charter schools offer these students.

Concluding Thoughts

From my seven years of experience at Locke High School, I have come to realize that our students are strong and resilient. They endured violent school conditions, a horrible educational atmosphere, and a takeover that did not fulfill the promises made to them. Despite all of this, the students continued to push forward and do the best they could. Because they were so diligent and overcame so many trials and tribulations in their schooling, we must do all we can to offer them an equitable education. Because they have graduated, we must at the very least take their experiences and ensure that students similar to them can receive a quality education. This study has done that. It has taken their experiences, defined the shortcomings of their high school experience, and explained how a takeover could be improved. I am grateful for the students of Locke High School and the amazing young people they are now and are becoming. Even though they caught national media attention with the riot that occurred during their freshman year and the takeover that took place in their 10th-grade year, the hope is that Charter Management Organizations will take their words and experiences to create more thoughtful and student-centered takeovers in the future.

APPENDIX A

Student Interview/Focus Group Questions

Questions for Interview 1

1. Demographic questions:
    a. What is your name, age, gender, ethnicity, pseudonym?
    b. How would you describe yourself?
    c. How would you describe yourself as a student?
    d. How has your senior year been so far?
2. The school
    a. Describe old Locke, which was under LAUSD, during your freshman year.
    b. How did you feel coming to school here?
    c. How did you feel about Locke?
    d. Did you feel that you belonged there?
    e. If you were to give old Locke a grade, what grade would you give it? Why?
3. Takeover
    a. Describe Locke under Green Dot
    b. How do you feel coming to school here?
    c. How do you feel about new Locke?
    d. Do you feel that you belong here?
    e. If you were to give new Locke a grade, what grade would you give new Locke?
4. Photo elicitation
    a. Describe your photo project (the student will have the project in their hands)
        i. Using your photo essay, explain each photograph.
        ii. What stories can you tell about these pictures?
        iii. Why did you choose these specific pictures?
5. What is your favorite story that you could tell me about Locke, from any of your four years at Locke?

Questions for Interview 2

1. Green Dot's takeover of Locke
    a. Do you feel that the school is better or worse?
        i. Why?
    b. What is the best thing about the takeover?
    c. What is the worst thing about the takeover?
    d. What would you have changed about the takeover?
2. How has the takeover affected your social life?
    a. How has the takeover affected you socially?
    b. How has the takeover of Locke affected your friendships?
    c. How has the takeover affected the social activities at the school?
3. How has the takeover affected your academic life?
    a. In what ways has the takeover affected you academically?
    b. How would you compare the teachers under old Locke and new Locke?
    c. What was your learning experience like under old Locke?
    d. What is your learning experience like under new Locke?
4. How has the takeover affected your personal life?
    a. Do you spend more or less time at Locke since the takeover?
    b. How has the takeover affected your family?
    c. How do you think you would be different as a person if Locke remained under LAUSD?
    d. Has anything changed in your life as a result of the takeover?
        i. (If yes) what?
        ii. (In no) should anything have changed?
    e. How have you, as a person, changed because of the takeover?
    f. Do you feel that the takeover is personally good for you or bad for you?
        i. Why?
5. Charter school takeover
    a. Why Locke? Why did Green Dot choose to take over Locke?
        i. Do you think that the demographics of Locke played a role in the decision for Green Dot to takeover Locke High School? If so, how?
        ii. Do you think the community surrounding Locke played a role in Green Dot's decision to takeover Locke?

Questions for Interview 3

1. Personal stories
   a. How has your perception of Locke changed over the last four years?
   b. What stands out the most from your freshman year?
2. Locke under LAUSD
         i. What events from your freshman year stand out to you the most?
   b. Here are some quotes from the media concerning old Locke. Do you agree with them or disagree with them? Why?
         i. "Class was just like a zoo. Kids were running around. They just do whatever they wanna do in the classroom. The teacher was just sitting there reading a book." (Internet news story)
        ii. "It's a very large school situated in a very bad neighborhood. Unstable gang and crime problems. Unstable families, a large immigrant population, many of whom are not conversant in English. A whole culture of poverty that leads to a lack of a culture of achievement." (Book)
       iii. "Most of the time, if we weren't teaching ourselves, we weren't learning at all." (Internet news story)
        iv. "The campus at 111th and San Pedro streets has long been one of the city's most troubled. This school year has been particularly difficult, with near-daily fights -- albeit on a much smaller scale -- during much of the fall and winter." (Newspaper)
3. Events concerning the takeover
   a. How did you feel when it was announced that Green Dot would take over Locke?
   b. What part did you take in the takeover of Locke?
   c. What voice did you have in the takeover of Locke?
   d. What choices did you have concerning the takeover of Locke?
4. Locke under Green Dot
   a. How was the first year under Green Dot?
         i. Describe that first year under Green Dot for me, from your point of view.
        ii. If you were to grade Green Dot on the takeover after that first year, what grade would you give them?
       iii. Give me a story from that first year under Green Dot.
   b. How was the second year under Green Dot?

    i. Describe that second year under Green Dot for me, from your point of view.

    ii. If you were to grade Green Dot on the takeover after that second year, what grade would you give them?

    iii. Give me a story from that second year under Green Dot.

  c. How was the third year under Green Dot?

    i. Describe you third year under Green Dot for me, from your point of view.

    ii. If you were to grade Green Dot on the takeover after these three years, what grade would you give them?

    iii. Give me a story from this year under Green Dot.

  d. Here are some quotes from the media concerning new Locke. Do you agree with them or disagree with them? Why?

    i. "This year, the halls are virtually empty during class. Teachers and aides say the campus is almost graffiti-free, and fights have diminished from one a day or so to less than one a month. Tardiness and ditching are down, now that both of those bring detention. Student attendance for September and October averaged 92%, close to that at suburban high schools." (Newspaper)

    ii. "Students say the campus is safer and calmer. The teachers, although mostly young and inexperienced, receive praise for being devoted and effective. There are signs of academic progress. Students repeat one point over and over: Instruction is better and nearly all teachers work hard and expect them to achieve." (Newspaper)

    iii. "It's night and day" (Newspaper)

    iv. "There's no doubt that students at the Watts school are better off for the Green Dot takeover." (Newspaper)

5. In your own words, tell me the story of the Locke takeover.

6. Is the Green Dot takeover of Locke successful?

  a. Explain briefly

Focus Group Questions

1. How would you, as a group of students, describe old Locke?
2. How would you, as a group of students, describe new Locke?
3. In what ways has Green Dot impacted Locke?
4. In what ways has the takeover affected you as students?
5. Green Dot assigned all of the LAUSD students to its own school.
   a. What are your thoughts concerning this decision?
6. If Green Dot had asked for student volunteers to help with the takeover, would you have assisted Green Dot with the takeover of Locke? Why or why not?
7. If you could go back in time, would you have chosen to go to Locke, or would you have chosen a different school to attend your four years?
8. If you had a younger sibling, would you want them to attend Locke?
   a. Why or why not?
9. Why Locke? Why did Green Dot choose to take over Locke?
10. What is your most vivid memory of your four years at Locke?
11. If you could describe your four years at Locke in one sentence, how would you describe them?
12. Using your photo essay, show one picture that shows the impact that Green Dot has had on you as a student. Explain.
13. Has the photo essay and the interviews helped you to organize and analyze your thoughts, experiences, and stories about the takeover?

APPENDIX B

Introduction to the Project Handout

The Story of the Locke High School Takeover

through a Photo Essay of Student Voice

[STUDENT PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT]

Mr. Beardall

Are you interested in photography? Do you like expressing yourself and your viewpoint through film, art and other creative media? If so, then I would greatly appreciate your involvement in the final project of my research dissertation. I am now looking to gather information from my students about their perceptions and opinions regarding the Locke High School takeover from LAUSD by Green Dot through the creation of a photographic essay. Many of you have been here at Locke during this entire transition and have a lot of thoughts on this issue. I would love to see these opinions depicted as pictures. If you think you are up for the requirements listed below, let me know by February 28th, 2011. I am taking committed students with the understanding that only FIVE student projects will be included in the final analysis for my dissertation.

I am currently finishing my degree for a Doctorate in Education and in order to do so I must complete student research this spring. I am required to complete a dissertation of which I have already finished my literature studies. I am now looking to gather information from my students about their perceptions and opinions regarding the Green Dot takeover of Locke High School from LAUSD. Many of you have been here at Locke during this entire transition and have a lot of thoughts on this issue. I would love to hear them. While there are many stories being told and written about the Locke takeover, none of these publications focus significantly enough on the student voice. As the biggest stakeholder and the people who make this school possible by being here every day, it is important for us to focus on your experiences about the changes that have taken place here over the past few years.

Description of the project:

        The purpose of this study is to gather, examine and analyze the opinions and perceptions of students who have been involved in the takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools. With little academic research completed in this specific area of the voice of high needs students at Locke High School, this study hopes to create a platform by which the student voice and student perspective can be seen, heard and incorporated into the discussion of whether or not charter takeovers are a good fit model for failing urban schools in Los Angeles. This research will involve student essays, interviews, and a group interview. The research will require the participation of five students who have been at Locke High School before and after the takeover.

Photographer Requirements & Timeline:

1. You have to have been a student before, during and after the takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools.

2. You are committed to turning in a quality photo essay on March 14th , 2011.

3. You agree to meet with Mr. Beardall no less than three times prior to student scheduled interview to discuss the quality of images and progress of photo essay narrative. It is crucial that all equipment questions and concerns are answered right away and not postponed until the final project due date.

4. You agree to use available camera equipment only when provided permission by Mr. Beardall.

5. Should your project become a finalist within my research, you agree to a one-on-one interview to discuss the themes, perceptions and student voice portrayed within the photo essay project.

Students will be provided all necessary equipment to complete this project and are welcome to visit Mr. Beardall's classroom to discuss their work before school, during passing period and after school should the student not be enrolled within a photography course.

While you will take many photographs in the coming weeks, keep in mind that your final submission will include a total of TWELVE of your best shots. Additionally, each photograph will include a three sentence description. The first sentence will explain the picture and how it relates to the topic. The second and third sentences will illuminate the questions asked and discuss the theme of the questions asked relating to the theme.

Remember to be as creative and open as you can with this project. Your photographs will help to construct your voice so be sure you complete this project with great care.

Photograph Breakdown
- One picture that encompasses your student perception of the successes and failures of the Green Dot takeover with an in depth explanation of how this photo best describes your student voice.

- One picture chosen for your project cover.

- Ten photographs, one per subtopic

The following ten areas and themes were taken from conversations with students about Locke High School. These are a few of the areas that they have discussed concerning old Locke and new Locke. Students will be expected to produce photographs that reflect their own voice in ten areas.

The ten areas and themes for the photo essay
1. Safety
   (Do you feel safe at school? How is this better or worse with new Locke?)
2. Facilities
   (Is it well maintained? Does everything work?)
3. Overall quality of school experience
   (Have you had a good experience at Locke?)
4. Quality of teaching & learning
   (Have you had a good academic experience at Locke?)
5. Locke High School culture
   (What is the overall culture of the school? Does it represent you?)
6. Overall sense of belonging
   (Do you feel integrated into the Locke school community?)
7. Academic support
   (Do you have college support and help with your schoolwork? Are there people at Locke that help you when you need it?)
8. Personalization
   (Do feel that people at the school know you and that your education fits you well? Do you get what you personally need from the school?)
9. Relationship of Locke to the surrounding community
   (Do you believe that Locke still belongs to the surrounding community and represents the community? Is the school a part of the community or separated from it?)
10. Change as a result of the takeover: before and after

(What has changed at Locke as a result of the takeover? What is better or worse about the school because of the takeover?)

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Mr. Beardall at any time in room 313.

APPENDIX C

Loyola Marymount University

Informed Consent Form

February 1st, 2011

Loyola Marymount University

A study on the views and experiences of students in a charter school takeover

1) I hereby authorize Joshua M. Beardall to include me (my child/ward) in the following research study: Critical Race Theory & Charter School Reform in Los Angeles: The Story of Locke High School through a Qualitative Study of Student Voice

2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to ascertain the perceptions, experiences, and stories of students during the charter school takeover of Locke High School and which will last for approximately two months.

3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I was a student at Locke before and after the takeover.

4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will create a photo essay about the transformation and then be involved in a minimum of three interviews and then a group interview.

   The investigator(s) will help guide the photo essay process and conduct the interviews.

   These procedures have been explained to me by Joshua M. Beardall.

5) I understand that I will be videotaped, audiotaped and/or photographed in the process of these research procedures. 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: inconvenience with interviewing.

7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are that people will better understand the perceptions, experiences, and stories of Locke students concerning the charter school takeover of Locke High School.

8) I understand that the following alternative procedures (and/or drugs) are available. The reason these are not being used is:

    _____

9) I understand that Joshua M. Beardall who can be reached at 310 525-4126 or jbeardal@lion.lmu.edu will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.

10) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.

11) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to my grade or prejudice from the teacher.

12) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.

13) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.

14) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.

15) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Hardy, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.

16) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature _____

Date_____

Witness _____

Date _____

                                        OR

Subject is a minor (age_____), or is unable to sign because

_____

Mother/Father/Guardian _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandum of Understanding

To: Dr. Cristina de Jesus, Chief Academic Officer, Green Dot Public Schools
Veronica Coleman, Principal, Locke Launch to College Academy

From: Joshua M. Beardall, Doctoral Candidate, Loyola Marymount University

Subject: An Ethnographic Research Project with Locke High School Launch to College Academy

Date: January 18, 2011

Purpose, Goals, and Need for the Project:

Los Angeles is currently experiencing an unparalleled level of growth and progress within the national charter school movement. New schools are blossoming all over the city. Some are being started in church basements and renovated recreational centers while meanwhile, existing and often times failing schools are being taken over to implement public charters negotiated with the parent district. Researchers and informed educational reformists must take note that charter high schools "tend to service students who are markedly more disadvantaged than those of traditional high schools" (Edsource).

While it is believed that the high academic standards, small class size and innovative teaching philosophies characteristic of charter schools can yield the most academic and social benefits for urban youth of failing public school districts, absent from such a discussion is whether or not these laudable tenets of charter schools are actually realized equitably across geographic, socioeconomic and racial demographics, with a primary focus upon the conversion of Locke High School in South Los Angeles. When examining the changes taking place within school houses, it is necessary to look at the views and opinions of the students involved in this change. In the case of Locke High School, one must look at the counter-stories available to what the mainstream media has said about Locke. This project will aim to look at the perceptions and thoughts of students who have been a part of the Locke transformation project and infuse them into the transformation dialogue. It will also seek to find whether the students are telling the same story that the mainstream media has told about Locke High School.

Research Questions:

In order to ascertain the perceptions and thoughts of students who have been a part of the Locke transformation project, this study will study the following research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of 12th grade students of color who were students during the charter school takeover of Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools?

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2. What is the extent to which the mainstream narrative about Locke High School and the students' perception of Locke High School are disconnected or in error?

Research Methodology:

This study will use a Critical Race methodology in order to search and examine the perceptions and stories of Locke High School students. Within this methodology, the research will include 5 photo ethnographies, or photo essays, which will include a follow-up interview for each of the students who submit a photo ethnography. This study will also use a survey of roughly 120 students. The final research method will be indirect observation. A Critical Race methodology is appropriate for this research as the vast majority of students are a part of a racial minority and the purpose of the study is to examine the stories that they have to tell.

The data will be collected from students when they are available and ready to deliver them to me. Interviews will be conducted at a time of convenience for the student. Indirect observation will take place while students are conducting their projects. Surveys will be given during the beginning of the class for participating classes. This project will begin at the end of February, pending LMU's IRB (Institutional Review Board), and end one month from the start date, the end of March.
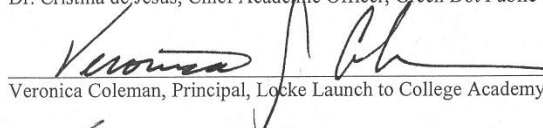
By signing this document, all parties agree that:

- Joshua M. Beardall will be able to conduct research with students within the Locke Launch to College Academy.

- Joshua M. Beardall will be able to use the names "Locke High School" and "Green Dot Public Schools" within the research.

- The research proposal fits within the rules and regulations of Green Dot Public Schools.

- All parties involved agree to abide by and comply with the requirements of the LMU Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for the protection of human subjects.
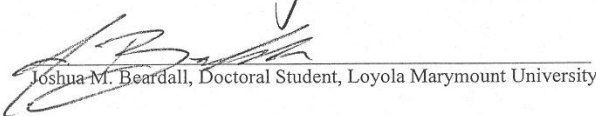
_____   _1/19/10_____
Dr. Cristina de Jesus, Chief Academic Officer, Green Dot Public Schools   Date

_____   1/24/11
Veronica Coleman, Principal, Locke Launch to College Academy   Date

_____   1-79-2011
Joshua M. Beardall, Doctoral Student, Loyola Marymount University   Date

Project Handouts and Digital Photo Essay Template

Name_____   Period_____

Photo Essay Project Graphic Organizer

Topic: **Safety**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Do you feel safe at school? How is this better or worse with new Locke?	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Facilities**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Is the school well maintained? Give examples. Does everything work? Give examples.	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Quality of school experience**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Have you had a good experience at Locke? Explain.	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Teaching & learning**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Have you had a good academic experience at Locke?	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **LHS Culture**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
What is the overall culture or atmosphere of the school? Explain. Does the school represent you? Explain.	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Sense of Belonging**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Do you feel integrated into the Locke school community? Explain.	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Academic Support**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Do you have college support and help with your schoolwork? Explain Are there people at Locke that help you when you need it? Explain	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Personalization**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Do feel that people at the school know you and that your education fits you well? Explain Do you get what you personally need from the school? Explain	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Relationship to community**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
Do you believe that Locke still belongs to the surrounding community and represents the community? Is the school a part of the community or separated from it? Explain.	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: **Resulting change from the takeover**	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
What has changed at Locke as a result of the takeover? Give examples. What is better or worse about the school because of the takeover? Give examples	
Is it better, same, or worse?	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: Cover Picture	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
	What artistic strategies will you use?

Topic: One Picture that shows your experience at Locke	What are you going to take pictures of to show this?
	What artistic strategies will you use?

Digital Photo Essay Template

ALBUM TITLE HERE

Your Name

Locke High School – Spring 2011

A brief summary about the album can go over here.

TIP: The Photo framing and shadow effect you see here and in subsequent pages is very simply and easy to add using new Word 2007. As soon as you click on a picture you will see the picture tool activated in the new ribbon control on the top and you can easily choose on of the effect for your picture. In fact the new enhanced functionality allows you to view the effect even before you make the final choice by showing you live preview.

SAFETY

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & LOCKE SAFETY HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

1. Do you feel safe at school? Why or why not?

2. How is this better or worse with new Locke? Give examples.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.
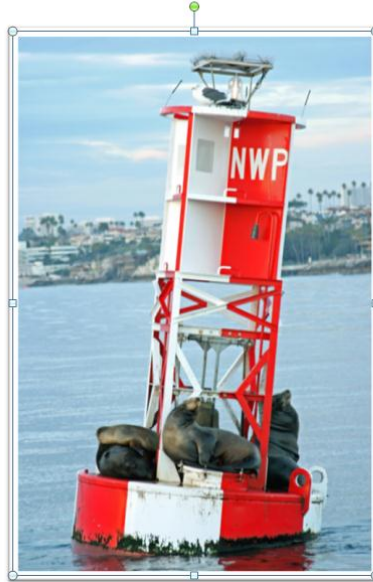
228

FACILITIES

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & LOCKE FACILITIES HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

     1. Is the school well maintained? Give examples.

     2. Does everything work? Give examples.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

QUALITY OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AT LOCKE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.
1. Have you had a good experience at Locke? Explain by providing three examples.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

230

TEACHING & LEARNING

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO OF LOCKE TEACHING & LEARNING HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

1. Have you had a good academic experience at Locke? Give examples.

2. What could enhance or make those experiences better for future Locke students?

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

LHS CULTURE

PHOTO TITLE
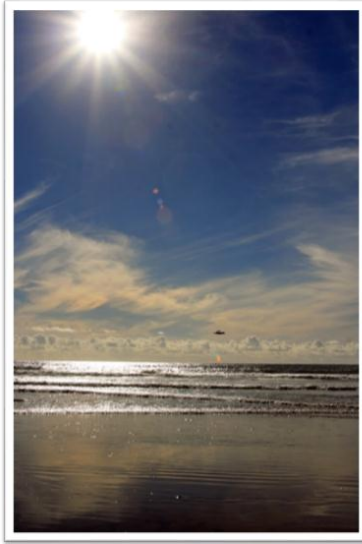
LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL CULTURE AT LOCKE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

1. What is the overall culture or atmosphere of the school? Explain.

2. Does the school represent you? Explain.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision.

SENSE OF BELONGING

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & SENSE OF BELONGING HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

1. Do you feel integrated into the Locke school community? Explain.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.
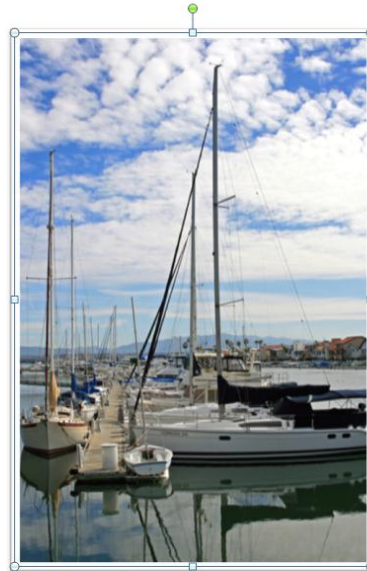
ACADEMIC SUPPORT

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & ACADEMIC SUPPORT HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

    1. Do you have college support and help with your schoolwork? Explain.

    2. Are there people at Locke that help you when you need it? Explain.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

SCHOOL PERSONALIZATION

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & PERSONALIZATION AT LOCKE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.
   1. Do feel that people at the school know you and that your education fits you well? Explain.

   2. Do you get what you personally need from the school? Explain.

   Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & LOCKE'S COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

1. Do you believe that Locke still belongs to the surrounding community and represents the community?

2. Is the school a part of the community or separated from it? Explain.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

236

RESULTING TAKEOVER CHANGE

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO & LOCKE CHANGE SINCE THE TAKEOVER HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

1. What has changed at Locke as a result of the takeover? Give examples.

2. What is better or worse about the school because of the takeover? Give examples

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

MY FEELINGS CONCERNING THE GREEN DOT TAKEOVER.

PHOTO TITLE

LIST THE SPECIFIC LOCATION THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

BETTER/SAME/WORSE (CHOOSE ONE)

PROVIDE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PHOTO THAT ENCOMPASSES YOUR STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF THE GREEN DOT TAKEOVER HERE BY MAKING SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS. THIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF THREE SENTENCES.

Next step? Briefly interview your fellow classmates and ask them for feedback on the photo that agrees with your decision that facilities are better/same/worse than under LAUSD and WHY. Have them put their answer in two sentences and quote them here. Include a minimum of ONE full sentence quote.

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