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Teacher Understanding of Curricular and Pedagogical Decision-Making Processes at an Urban Charter School

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by

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Processes at an Urban Charter School

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Understanding of Curricular and Pedagogical Decision-Making Processes at an Urban Charter School

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This qualitative study featured two research endeavors. The first was a narrative inquiry of six teachers at Weedpatch Charter School as they understood curricular and pedagogical decision-making. These teachers, along with the Weedpatch Charter School founder, participated in this study soon after the curriculum and instruction decision-making had undergone a democratization effort whereby a top-down administrative approach was replaced by a teacher-led effort. Ironically, WCS school leadership welcomed the latter effort, despite the antiteacher legacy of the charter movement, which has long featured "at will" employment and no collective bargaining. The second component of this study was critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the curricular and pedagogical manuals used at WCS before and after the democratization effort. The findings in this study point to a dialectical set of developments at WCS that made it possible for teachers to move from a period of disillusionment into a period of active teacher agency. Similarly, the document analysis findings point to the need for more nuanced understandings of the ideological underpinnings of charter schools.

Discourse analysis determined that WCS did not necessarily present a classic example of neoliberalism. Given the latter nuance, the manual that the teachers created was

counterhegemonic, liberatory, and ultimately contextual and contingent upon that very unique WCS dynamic. As such, the conclusion of this study was that charter leaders could learn from teacher understandings not by being prescriptive but by abiding by what the author has coined *contingent collectivism.*

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

There are many perspectives on the extent to which teachers should be involved in curricular and pedagogical decision-making at schools in the U.S. Most of the latter perspectives are often at extremes along the spectrum of philosophical approaches to education. Rather than relying on one prescriptive answer to the issue of teacher decision-making, this study provides more of a dialectical approach to the issue. In essence, the teacher understandings highlighted by this study were the result of dynamic dialectical shifts in both their own perspectives and those of the educational institutions that employ them. Therefore, the notion of dialectical potential that runs throughout this study not as a theoretical framework but as a guiding principle allows for a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the perspectives provided by the research participants.

This study was an attempt to capture teacher perspectives of the decision-making processes at a rather unique urban charter school. Although there are countless charter high schools in America, Weedpatch Charter School (WCS) was part of a limited number of progressive charter schools that employed authentic/inclusive approaches to instruction. It seemed to be a good source for a fresh set of teacher perspectives on whether the decision-making processes were as progressive as WCS's approach to instruction. The significance of such work is paramount because in terms of instruction, the school, like most charters, did not have a collective bargaining contract with a union. Ultimately, for any reform to work, teachers

must feel that a progressive approach to instruction for young people is coupled with a progressive approach to decision-making.

Today, many charter schools in the United States consistently talk about how they have figured out how to build a high-performing urban charter school (Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003). Aside from persistently relying on high stakes testing by which to measure school success, the administration at such schools often points to the fact that it hired teachers from elite American universities who can better educate our young people. Yet, what can be made of their efforts when these teachers are criticized for preparing future middle managers or subservient workers via an oppressive test prep factory model (Goodman, 2004)? Perhaps the efforts to stamp out student voices and decision-making may be paralleled by an effort to stamp out teacher voices as well.

The latter would be an unfortunate scenario, because almost two decades ago, new charter school legislation seemed to be ushering in a new era of shared decision-making (Smith, 2001). Reports regarding the original legislation in Minnesota were filled with so much talk of teacher-initiated reforms and a sense of democratization that drove the charter movement; this study tries to account for the prevalence of some of the latter concepts at Weedpatch Charter School. It is of paramount importance that American schools begin to reclaim a path that democratizes teacher input—but that effort is yet to occur on a national scale in any significant manner (Wells, 2002). Apple (2006) has often questioned whether recent education reform intends to maintain oppressive power relations despite its use of democratic vocabulary to describe such reforms. The latter circumstance, whether well intentioned or not, continues the

cycle of domination that leaves people of color and working class communities in subjugated positions.

School Background

The teachers who participated in this narrative inquiry were employed by Weedpatch Charter School. WCS was an alternative school for 16 to 24 year olds who had either dropped out of or been expelled from traditional academic environments. WCS students attended school full time during a trimester-aligned year in which they could earn up to 90 credits toward their high school diploma or certificate of completion. At WCS sites that had attained federal grant funding through the Weedpatch program, students attended school on alternate weeks and otherwise worked on community service projects that provided them vocational and leadership training, and gave them valuable job experience. WCS developed out of a directive from Weedpatch USA.

Weedpatch USA was a progressive community-focused development program that offered low-income youth an opportunity to work toward their high school diplomas while learning job skills and serving their communities by constructing affordable housing. Jim Rawley Collins, a veteran of conservation corps work, founded Weedpatch Charter School, which, as of the fall of 2010, was made up of 11 school sites, serving approximately 1,200 students throughout Southern and Central California. At the time of this study, each WCS site had between 80 and 100 students, four teachers, a registrar, at least one counselor, and varying numbers of support staff whose positions were contingent upon the amount of Department of Labor funding. WCS partnered with community organizations and operated the WASC-accredited diploma-granting high school program within their facilities. Though it worked

closely with its partner organizations, WCS was a separate entity with its own state ADA funds and administrative staff.

Unlike other charter schools that directly competed with traditional schools for students and funding, WCS did not compete with the traditional public school system as it worked only with students who had been pushed out by comprehensive schools. The ultimate goal of every WCS site was to grant students diplomas in addition to a set of immediately useful job skills. WCS teachers and students were engaged in a progressive learning process. As such, every stage of the student's progress was planned and measured as part of a collaborative effort among the student, teacher, parent, and school counselor. In its first three years of operation, WCS employed a slightly modified version of the Graduation Plus credit attainment system. Credits were offered in units of five over 12-week periods. In this way, a student could conceivably earn up to 90 credits per academic year—almost twice the number typically earned in a traditional school. Classes were organized around authentic learning tasks (ALTs), which showcased applied skills and knowledge for solving to meaningful problems. For example, students in algebra learned to plot graphs through the design and planning of an urban transit system in their community. Each class had three ALT projects, with which students could earn up to five credits by virtue of completing these authentic assessments. Teachers designed the projects in collaboration with the students, ensuring that student assets and funds of knowledge were accessed while meeting state standards.

After three years of using the approach mentioned above, WCS decided to move away from this packaged approach to a more progressive approach of project-based learning. Made recent to the time of this study, the decision took place because enough staff had organically

observed aspects of the model that seemed counter to the progressive mission and vision of WCS. Several teachers came forward to lead the development of a revamped version that would access all staff input. In the end, changes to the curriculum were made to allow a more emancipatory approach in the newly developed Collaborative and Authentic Manual (CAM). The two distinct eras regarding curricular and pedagogical decision-making will be referred to from here on as the Pre-CAM and CAM era. This study attempted to capture teacher perspectives on the decision-making processes at WCS before and after the move to a teacher-led instructional model.

Statement of the Problem

Whether education reform has been led by a charter school operator, a mayor, a governor, or a private business coalition, most of it seems to undermine the teaching profession because the decision-making processes too often exclude teachers. Currently, the public school teaching profession is situated in schools that are adversarial environments in which teachers feel that they are engaged in trench warfare (Ingersoll, 2003). Disparaging remarks against teachers are pervasive in America, unlike the treatment of similarly credentialed professions like lawyers, accountants, and medical doctors. Because everyone has gone through school, many people offer self-righteous opinions about teachers being overpaid and incompetent. Teacher bashing now includes blaming teachers for the lack of American global competitiveness, domestic economic stagnation, and the dismantling of the American family (Ingersoll, 2003).

Furthermore, Ingersoll (2003) has pointed out that despite the myriad topics they may have studied, teachers are not allowed to hone their talents but rather are placed in subject matter molds to teach a packaged and centralized set of standards. Such an educational model, focused

as it is on common outputs, regrettably resembles an assembly line theory of production that alienates teachers just as it does factory workers.

Although "teacher bashing" is pervasive in America across all categories of schooling, critics have pointed to more consistent teacher abuse in charter schools. In charter schools, student, parent, and administrator abuse is directed at teachers on a more regular basis than at teachers from traditional public schools (Wells, 2002). Aside from consistent media focus on the malfeasance of charter school leaders, there is a less often discussed phenomenon of charter school leaders abusing teacher labor (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2006). To be sure, charter teachers who start out willing to undertake a creative alternative to comprehensive schooling are sometimes led to believe that collective reform is the same as neoliberal "reforms" driven by market forces (Apple, 2006).

Ultimately, Meier (2004) has reminded us of the unfortunate reality that although collective bargaining efforts have been successful at a few charter schools, they have largely excluded defending the basic rights of charter schoolteachers. Yet, Meir has maintained that without substantial teacher input and support, any reform is likely to fail. She has argued that it does not take fancy social theories to explain what will happen in education when teachers—the essential talent—are relegated to carrying out orders and not allowed to be a part of the decision-making processes (Meir, 2004). Such a process is alive and well when charter teachers are, regrettably, asked to use a packaged and prescribed curriculum solely to raise the API of their respective charter schools.

Conceptual Framework: Teacher Agency

The conceptual framework in this narrative inquiry was *teacher agency.* To be clear

about what teacher agency means, the concept must be defined and then situated within this study's context. Changes to education in America over the past two decades have been largely influenced by the dynamics of globalization (the multinational corporation's global pursuit of profit beyond traditional notions of political boundaries and economic regulations). Globalization, although largely an economic and political phenomenon of the past few decades, has had a direct impact on the work of teachers in the American educational system (Sinclair, 1999). Sinclair (1999) has also pointed out how globalization has not only transformed political and economic structures but also greatly diminished the potential for teachers to incorporate their agency to resist those forces. In this specific context, therefore, teacher agency can be defined as curricular and pedagogical resistance to oppressive global market forces. Subsequently, for this particular study, teacher agency included the right not only to be autonomous but also to teach the kind of curriculum that can liberate young people from the global market forces that would otherwise oppress them. The charter movement, which will be described in the literature review, has heretofore convoluted the notion of such teacher agency in ways that perpetuate inequality for the profession and for students in urban communities.

If they do not enlist their agency against global forces of capital that are decimating impoverished communities of color, teachers will be reduced to mere robots that obediently facilitate the consolidation of globalization (Apple, 2006). In the climate of expanded globalization, teachers are not seen as intellectuals but rather as de-intellectualized machines who lead lives of quiet desperation while carrying out the scripted curriculum approved and funded by today's multinational corporations (Apple, 2006; Wells, 2002).

Educators who are informed by such an agency and internal orientation pay less attention to teaching and more attention to the intersection of social, economic, and political phenomena. This notion of a teacher-self cannot be removed from the context of neoliberalism, in which market forces seep into any altruistic endeavor (Delors, 1996). In the latter context, teachers who pursue agency employ a critical stance of school phenomena for the purpose of gaining new levels of agency. Highlighting teacher agency in this context can lead to a more critical understanding of decision-making processes at charter schools that have moved away from the original intention of teacher autonomy (Block, 1995; Morris, Doll, & Pinar, 1999).

A functional understanding of teacher agency ultimately includes the dangerous and rarely acceptable idea that teachers have the capacity to carry out social change with the young people they teach. However, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have reminded us that conceptions of teacher agency should not be essentialized or reduced to simple binaries that promote the naïve idea that great teachers can heroically defeat oppressive structures. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1988), such a binary is too simplistic; they favor the idea of agency characterized by multiplicity because of the various and constant teacher interactions with oppressive structures. The dynamic, unfolding stages of education demand a philosophical reckoning with the dialectical potential within the current educational system and of the particularly nuanced agency that could emanate from the charter movement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to highlight the manner in which a set of teachers understood the decision-making processes at an urban charter school. The study also served to inform how curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes could be more inclusive of

teachers and their input. Malloy and Wohlstetter (2003) have argued that a high percentage of teachers were attracted to charter schools for the freedom to teach the way they want to teach. Therefore, an essential function of this study was to solicit a few teachers to unveil the potential for the further democratization of teacher input at urban charter schools. This study also sought to add to the currently limited research on the level of influence that charter schoolteachers have on decision-making over curriculum and pedagogy. Because Bomotti, Ginsberg, and Cobb (2000) have found that some charter schools teachers have a greater sense of autonomy over their classrooms, but less input than their comprehensive school counterparts when it came to school-wide decisions, the purpose of this study was not to find token input but real cooperative collaboration.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it can help capture WCS teacher perspectives on decision-making so that the findings can be used to understand not only the unfolding and dialectical potential for future teacher agency but also to give democratic hope to the charter movement itself. Conducting this study with Weedpatch teachers was vital, because teacher perceptions of decision-making at a progressive charter like WCS may be different, particularly as extensive literature has indicated that charter school organizational autonomy has been used and abused by charter developers who never transferred the promised autonomy to teachers (Fuller, 2002; Smith, 2001; Wells, 2002,). In the end, the findings of this study point to new decision-making processes that may better democratize teacher input and promote teacher autonomy. WCS might be the place for further research on how a progressive and responsive approach to instruction can be coupled with democratic input from teacher-intellectuals. The

findings may determine a way to steer clear of the possibility that these highly talented and teacher/change agents find traces of insincerity and give up hope on the democratic potential that resides within the charter movement. This danger is substantiated by research from Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak (2005), which has pointed to clear evidence that charter teachers with strong academic backgrounds are most inclined to leave the teaching profession altogether.

In conducting a narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) found that what teachers said was as varied as the manner in which the oppressions manifested. This study ultimately attempted to avoid the kind of essentialism that reduces teacher agency to a formula for future educational change. Alternative forms of research threaten to replicate such forms of oppression.

As Conley (1991) has pointed out in her research on the *contested ground,* teachers and administrators often don't cooperate. As such, this study ultimately provides a framework for both charter leaders and teachers to reclaim the kind of democratically distributed leadership that is so vital to the future of education reform and justice.

Research Questions

- What are the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes at an urban charter school?
- How do teachers understand these decision-making processes?
- How can those understandings inform more inclusive curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes?

Research Design and Methodology

The driving force behind this study's material was narrative inquiry, a method that does not attempt to assign variables upfront, but rather seeks to recognize the context of a situation and to understand the meaning that people to attach to social phenomena (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The researcher conducted a qualitative triangulation via the following: (a) individual interviews with six teachers featuring a series of 8 to 10 open-ended questions. No observations took place, as the focus was on their perspectives not on their practices. Interviews comprised three one to two hour-long interviews with each teacher and an interview with the founder and CEO of WCS, Jim Rawley Collins; (b) Additionally, a focus group was formed with three of those six teachers to further dissect issues that surfaces from interviews; (c) Lastly, the researcher undertook critical discourse analysis of all training manual/materials, using Giroux's *Teachers as Intellectuals* (1987) as a framework to look for evidence of democratic decision-making. Narrative inquiry informed the basis of this study, which was ultimately representative of a qualitative approach.

Organization of the Study

Premise

Given the current climate of unprecedented teacher bashing, this study took a closer look at how teachers were involved in curricular and pedagogical decision-making and how their understandings could lead to further democratization.

Approaches

A narrative inquiry was conducted at an urban charter school that featured a progressive curriculum and pedagogy intended to reengage out-of-school youth. Critical discourse analysis was performed to compare the ideological underpinnings of the Pre-CAM and CAM era at WCS with regard to curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Literature Review

The literature primarily came from the research on teacher labor and, specifically, on charter schoolteacher labor. Although extensive research has been conducted on the financial, structural, and policy aspects of charter schools, very little research highlights teacher input on decision-making processes. This study has now added to that limited research.

Interpretive Analysis of Teacher Narratives

Data collection methods included individual interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews; data were then analyzed via interpretive analysis. By virtue of this process, data were coded and tied together with vignettes. The individual interview data were also coded to allow for thematic focus group discussion. This approach to research was an attempt to interpret and explain what another person/author said (in this case, what WCS teachers said). Interpretive analysis was designed to weave individual narratives to determine the nature of the oppressive forces against teachers.

Interpretive Analysis of Documents

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) of documents was applied to find traces of the school's ideological openness or resistance to teacher input and democratic decision-making. The latter CDA employed Giroux's *Teachers as Intellectuals* (1987) as a guiding text.

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

This qualitative study featured two research endeavors. Chapter Four offers a critical discourse analysis of the curricular and pedagogical manuals used at WCS before and after the democratization effort to allow for more teacher input. The document analysis findings point to the need for more nuanced understandings of ideological underpinnings within charter schools. The discourse analysis concludes by noting that WCS was not necessarily a classic example of neoliberalism, as so many critics of the charter movement would assume. Similarly, in Chapter Five, findings from the narrative inquiry of six teachers at Weedpatch Charter School revealed that WCS rather ironically welcomed this democratization, despite an anti-teacher legacy in the charter movement, which has long featured "at will" employment and the absence of collective bargaining. The findings of the narrative inquiry point to a dialectical set of developments at WCS that allowed teachers to go from a period of disillusionment to a period of active teacher agency. Given the result, the manual that the teachers created was counterhegemonic and liberatory—and was ultimately contextual and contingent upon that very unique WCS dynamic.

Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that charters can learn from teacher understandings not by being prescriptive but by abiding by what the author has coined *contingent collectivism.* Because the current research on this topic is limited, this study may convince more charter school developers and teachers of the importance of collaborative decision-making with regard to curriculum and pedagogy.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

An effective literature review can appropriately situate and contextualize this study. To effectively analyze teacher understandings of the pedagogical and curricular decision-making processes at an urban charter school, a review of two types of literature is appropriate: (a) literature that captures the history of teacher decision-making in traditional and charter schools, and (b) literature that pertains to teacher agency. Both of these reviews of the literature were undertaken in the context of curricular and pedagogical decision-making and teacher understanding of that decision-making.

Uniqueness of Charter Context

Lack of Teacher Decision-Making Literature in Charter Context

The literature covering the charter movement is rather extensive in the areas of charter legislation, charter finance, and overall charter school challenges to traditional schooling. However, relatively little scholarship has addressed how teachers perceive their participation—or lack of—in curricular and pedagogical decision-making. The following literature review is an attempt to capture the context of teacher decision-making in general and to situate what little research exists on what teacher agency has looked like in the context of the charter school.

Historical Overview of Teacher Decision-Making

Why Teacher Decision-Making?

Teacher participation in decision-making has historically been linked to an educational effort to balance administrative demands for "productivity," which—in educational terms—is

most often linked to student achievement (Benson & Malone, 1987). If the metaphor of workers in a factory setting can be applied here, then it is conceivable to conclude that teacher alienation can also manifest as a result of unrealistic expectations about teacher productivity (Benson & Malone, 1987). Therefore, we must begin an historical overview of teacher decision-making emanating from a teacher seeking to avoid the alienating expectations of school administrators.

Benson and Malone (1987), in their discussion of "alienation," have spoken to an historical shift in which schools became more responsive to the development of teacher efficacy with regard to leadership. They highlighted the deliberate intention of school leaders (in the pre-charter era) to motivate teachers to increase the school's efficiency with regard to student achievement. However, Benson and Malone (1987) have also pointed out that teachers were not often seen as active shapers of a school and were still more likely to be passive recipients of school directives.

Conley (1991) has described the realm in which teachers could potentially experience such alienation as *contested ground,* because there are contentious spaces in schools, in which both teachers and administrators feel that they are entitled to decision-making authority. However, Conley has concluded that a potentially less contentious scenario could develop in which a sort of buffer zone could reside between what is traditionally within the respective scope of teachers and administrators. Conley (1991) has concluded that further research is necessary to decide what decisions are to be made by who because lack of clarity will create animosity as both teachers and administrators try to assume leadership on *contested ground*.

Ultimately, the goal of teacher decision-making must be more elaborate than a simple expectation of participation. Taylor and Tashakkori (1997) have described the final goal of

teacher involvement in decision-making as *empowerment*. For Taylor and Tashakkori, shared decision-making was conceived as a stepping-stone for teachers to eventually participate in change efforts outside of the school. Smylie (1992) has continued with this same perspective by arguing that teachers could better carry out systemic change if they were allowed to enhance their decision-making at the highest level. In the end, the idea of teacher involvement in decision-making relates to the assumption held by many teachers when they enter the profession: that they will be "agents of change."

Teacher Decision-Making in Public Schools 1970s–1990s

With an understanding of the basis for teacher-decision-making, we must turn to the historical origins that led up to the initial charter legislation. Hatch, White, and Faigenbaum (2005) have delineated a rather general but concise history of teacher involvement in decision-making over the last four decades. In the 1970s, teachers were given authority for decision-making by taking roles as department heads. These roles were their first experience with creating a sense of collaboration, but it was still very much a top-down replication of status quo power relations because department heads tended to behave like top-down administrators. In the 1980s, a new era of teacher decision-making brought forth specialization, specifically accessing teacher expertise with regard to curriculum and instruction. To be sure, such positions were for one staff at a given school, so the democratic inclusion of other teachers was not adequately carried out (Little, 2003). In essence, individuals were being empowered, but entire groups of teachers were not.

"Teachers as mentors" unfolded in the 1990s and was a phase that many began to feel had cooperative potential. Mentor teachers were not ignored as power positions but respected

for their potential to provide peer support (Little, 2003). The teacher-mentor model was followed by the most recent phenomenon, whereby teachers have been put into small learning communities in which they can work on educational objectives as a team (Hatch et al., 2005). Great debate still stirs about the effectiveness of teachers in small learning communities. Because they are such a recent phenomenon, small learning communities and their development still require further research.

SBM and Teacher Inclusion

Looking deeper at the origins of the idea that charters can be havens for teacher decision-making, extensive research points to the highly influential/successful efforts in allowing for teacher decision-making in the Site-Based Management (SBM) era. "Site-Based Management" was a popular reform effort that began in the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s, school districts started to see the value of giving teachers and principals more input than ever before. Conley and Conley (1990) have argued that there was severe dissatisfaction on the part of teachers before the onset of site-based decision-making, which offered a clear avenue for the relief of such tensions. In essence, SBM research shows that a lack of teacher satisfaction directly relates to the amount of decision-making teachers are allowed (Schneider, 1984). Alutto and Belasco (1972) have argued that teachers who are not given decision-making power are likely to be disgruntled. They have argued that Site-Based Management emerged to channel teacher input.

Although Site-Based Management was pivotal in allowing more input from teachers, the research shows that teachers were most concerned with decision-making regarding curriculum and instruction and, in fact, withdrew from the administrative functions that were emphasized by SBM (Bacharach & Conley, 1990). Conley and Bacharach (1990) unveiled how teacher

preference for curricular and pedagogical decision-making was not adequately accessed by SBM's greater emphasis on administrative school-wide decisions. However, the ineffective offering of curricular and pedagogical decision-making by SBM was soon replaced by the charter school era, which was originally conceived of as a vehicle for the continued expansion of teacher autonomy.

The 1990s and the Original Intention of Charter Schools: Teacher Autonomy

Fueled by the notion that teacher empowerment would be the cornerstone of charters, Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers, popularized the idea of charter schools. Shanker thought of the charter school as a model that would give teachers more autonomy and the ability to co-create new instructional approaches (Shanker, 1988). Shanker (1988) viewed the charter school as an instructional model in which teachers could finally be autonomous, in large part because of the historical influence brought forth by the administrative autonomy made possible by SBM.

Although some point to Albert Shanker as the originator of the charter concept, others point to a former teacher named Ray Budde (Finn & Kanstoroom, 2002). Budde first suggested the idea of a charter in the 1970s, which featured teachers as the recipients of charters enabled to create innovative approaches to curriculum and instruction (Budde, 1988). Whereas accountability was built into Budde's idea of a charter, that accountability was, in fact, determined by the teachers' sincere interest in the well-being of their students. Both Budde and Shanker emphasized that the teacher control that was so greatly needed in an American school system had become overly bureaucratic.

Budde and Shanker traced the origins of an inadequate educational system back to the historical lack of inclusion of teachers—the very individuals who are best able to plan the kind of instruction necessary for social change (Shanker, 1988). Nonetheless, charter schools today do not embody Budde's or Shanker's teacher-centered visions (Smith, 2001; Wells, 2002). The turn away from teacher-centered charter schools has much to do with the economic and political forces of the early 1990s that hijacked the charter movement from its original teacher-centered focus to a movement influenced by the era's globalization efforts of the time (Higginson, 1996).

Neoliberalism and Globalization's Effect on the Idea of Teacher-Centered Charter Schools

The neoliberal forces that began in the Reagan/Thatcher era were in full effect by the time charter school legislation was being authored in the early 1990s. Because the language around charter school legislation always highlighted the need to move beyond oppressive bureaucratic structures, charter schools somehow morphed into the neoliberal government deregulation efforts that began in the1980s (Smith, 2001). However, as Smith (2001) has argued, the democratic possibilities of charter schools incorporating teacher input were eradicated and replaced by a neoliberal effort to privatize with market-driven, top-down decision-making. In what amounts to an amazing historical redirection of ideologies, the charter school effort suddenly became more about breaking down "monopolies" to make room for privatized partnerships than about breaking down inefficient bureaucracies that were stifling teacher input (Smith, 2001).

In essence, the literature points to a shift from the democratic hope of charters as havens of collectivism in which teacher input is valued, to charters as controlled by individualism and market forces (Wells, 2002). Wells has argued that charter school decision-making is driven by

a neoliberal and globalization paradigm and not by liberation efforts in impoverished communities of color.

Anomalies in the Anti-collective Bargaining Charter Movement

Green Dot Public Schools in South LA are, indeed, an anomaly because their founder, Steve Barr, wanted to have a unionized staff from the outset. Although Green Dot teachers are not part of LAUSD's teachers' union (United Teachers Los Angeles), the Asociacion de Maestros Unidos (AMU) is a viable union that has been in place from the very beginning of the Green Dot story (New School Ventures Fund, 2007). Although AMU is to be commended as an exception to the lack of collective bargaining in charters, the major difference between United Teachers Los Angeles and AMU is that the latter does not grant teachers life-long tenure (New School Ventures Fund, 2007).

Another example of a charter anomaly that has promoted teacher input can be found in the Camino Nueva Charter Academy. The contract at Camino Nuevo has mandated that teachers have the right to a performance improvement plan if they are deemed unsatisfactory. The commendable goal of developing the Camino Nuevo union contract is related to the promotion of student achievement (Price, 2011). Although other charters have established unions or some form of teacher democratization, the examples are few and far between—which makes this study all the more significant.

Teacher Input in Charter Schools?

In light of historical phenomena (globalization and neoliberalism) that coincided with the advent of charter schools, the research has shown that teacher input in decision-making processes has been significantly minimized in charters despite all claims for autonomy in charter schools.

Charter schools are now the most recognizable symbol of education reform, claiming to close the achievement gap via a "democratic" effort highlighted by competition (Gill, Tempane, Ross, & Brewer, 2002. Nonetheless, the research has shown that charter schools—though they may vary from place to place—are essentially about three consistent components: decentralization, accountability, and competition—not about collaborative spaces for teacher input (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). Charter school supporters have made the argument that an absence of bureaucratic regulations have allowed school leaders and teachers the freedom to innovate on behalf of young people (Crawford & Fusarelli, 2001). Yet, the freedom is more of an economic freedom than a freedom to advance a conception of teacher agency.

School Structure Autonomy vs. Classroom Autonomy

There is no doubt that democratic decision-making at both the school and classroom level would effect more meaningful and progressive change in schools.

Although considerable research has examined the structural differences between charter and traditional schools, less research has focused on the experiences of teachers in charter schools. That charter schools are claiming improved student performance on the sole basis of a different organizational structure has become pervasive. The expectation was that school autonomy would naturally extend to teacher innovation, but the working conditions for teachers in charters have been less than inclusive (Crawford & Fusarelli, 2001).

Although some research has spoken to teacher satisfaction at charters, the research has not been conclusive with regard to greater teacher input in decision-making. Closer analyses of that teacher satisfaction have often confused school independence with teacher freedom. Koppich (1998) has concluded that many charter schoolteachers seek schools that have a certain

instructional approach. Given that most charters have a certain theme or instructional approach, teachers are definitely finding schools that are good fits for their own educational philosophies. The research has also indicated that most charter teachers look for schools with a specific mission, vision, or philosophy. In many states, the number one reason that charter teachers were choosing their respective places of employment was based on shared philosophies of education (Koppich, 1998). To be sure, teachers have great interest in finding schools that will allow them their own freedom; however, very little research points to the realization of that freedom for teachers.

Does School Flexibility Equal Teacher Flexibility?

Although school autonomy has certainly been well documented, the research has shown that charter schoolteachers are not generally recipients of the more democratic decision-making roles that were originally envisioned by charter school legislation (Wohlsetter & Wenning, 1995). Certainly the research has shown that teachers report a variety of reasons for choosing to work in charter schools; aside from the school's educational philosophy, reasons include smaller school and class sizes and an opportunity to group with like-minded educators. Teachers frequently use the term *flexibility* when they talk about their schools (Bierlein, 1997).

But there is more to this surface assumption that school flexibility inherently equates to teacher input and autonomy. The evidence has suggested that charter schools are still not welcoming democratic input from teachers on curricular and decision-making processes (Vasudeva & Grutzik, 2000). Koppich (1998) has found that the majority of teachers were drawn to charter schools for greater flexibility and autonomy, but limited research substantiates that

charters are truly attracting teachers who are seeking more input into school decision-making and looking for an environment in which they are free to innovate in their classrooms. Bomotti, Ginsberg, and Cobb (1999) have found that teachers had degrees of autonomy on an individual basis but not at the school-wide level.

Surprisingly, very little difference seems to exist between teacher input levels at public schools and teacher input levels at charter schools. When it comes to classroom pedagogy and instruction in charter schools, teacher input on what that can look like does not look very different from teacher input in a traditional public schooling system (Vasudeva & Grutzik, 2000). In sum, it is one thing for a teacher to find a school with a similar vision and quite another phenomenon to find a school that allows teachers to have a say in making adjustments to that instructional vision. Some researchers have determined that charter school may just be replicating the same "top-down" decision-making processes that prevail in traditional public schools (Fuller, 2002).

Can the Charter Movement be a Progressive Movement*?*

Herbert Gintis, in *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), has argued, with Samuel Bowles, that the US capitalist system necessarily reproduces capitalist inequality in its school system. The argument laid out by Bowles and Gintis (1976) was monumental, because the argument was grounded in the logic that oppressive market forces could never create the kind of emancipatory education that would counter the inequities of American society.

Yet, in the foreword to *The Emancipatory Promise of Charter Schools* (2004), Gintis has reversed many of his extreme claims from *Schooling Capitalist America* (1976). In the opening to his book on the hope of school choice, Gintis has defended charters on the following three

grounds: (a) the powerful hope of creative teachers who start charter schools, (b) the greater influence that parents can have on charters, and (c) the kind of cooperation that will surface based on competition. For Gintis to have such a dramatic reversal in his opinion regarding the deregulation of schools speaks to the possibility that some nuance is at play in this battle between a recalcitrant traditional school system and its charter school detractors.

False Consciousness or Nuanced Resistance?

Claiming that the educational Left is mired in the 1960s notion that good education should be grounded in anti-desegregation notions and vocabularies, Eric Rofes has proposed that charter leaders cannot all be accused of being victims of what Marx called "false consciousness" (the unknowing allegiance to the reproduction of class inequality) (Rofes, 2004). In other words, more nuance and less "black/white" categorization in discussions of the charter movement versus traditional schools are valuable to gaining a good understanding of teacher responses in the narrative inquiry.

Formal Democratization Emanating out of the Charter Movement

Ultimately, the feedback from teachers at WCS in this study cannot be understood exclusively within the framework of neoliberalism. In fact, the charter movement as a whole cannot be neatly explained by employing neoliberal theory alone. Nuanced understandings are necessary. According to Buchen and Newell (2004), just because schooling has been inherently democratic does not mean that collaborative work cannot be done. They have pointed to some of the work being done in the Midwest, from which teacher cooperatives have emanated and are formally bringing democratization to life. In most of the settings studied by Buchen and Newell (2004), teachers were actually creating nonprofit organizations that functioned as cooperatives,

and doing away with the need for typical school administration. Dirkswager (2002) has alluded to the work of Edvisions cooperatives in the Midwest, where teacher-led schools have been primarily charters. Therefore, understanding the dialectical potential within the current charter movement is important, as it may lead to more formal teacher democratization.

Conclusion

Although some nuanced understandings may exist regarding teacher input in the charter movement, Meier (2004) has explained that these considerations have been largely excluded when it comes to defending the basic rights of charter schoolteachers. Though Meier may not have been arguing that collective bargaining must accompany the advent of charter schools, she has demonstrated a commitment to the notion that without substantial teacher input and support, any reform is likely to fail. She has argued that it does not take fancy social theories to explain what will happen in education when teachers—the essential talent—are relegated to carrying out orders and are not allowed to be a part of decision-making processes (Meier, 2004).

Teacher Agency

Agency and the Neoliberal Historical Context

To understand how both the original teacher democratization intentions of charters and the power of teacher agency were hijacked, we must look again to the historical situation that was in place at the outset of charter legislation. According to the research, one major reason for this turn has to do with the economic and political forces of neoliberalism in the early 1990s (Apple, 2006; Smith, 2001; Wells, 2002). Neoliberalism has guided many of the recent national and international education reforms, including the staggering growth of charter schools (Apple, 2006). Yet, neoliberalism goes so unnoticed as an intellectual debate in the policy arena that its

left unchallenged outside of academia (Apple, 2006). Over the last three decades, neoliberalism has served as an uncontested worldview promoting countless social, economic, and political reforms (Harvey, 2005).

As Olssen (1996) has pointed out, neoliberalism calls for entrepreneurial efforts as opposed to policies that set them free to act on their own. A neoliberal worldview sees it as the government's responsibility to pursue the goals of state-sponsored economic freedom, competition, and individual initiative (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Ultimately, neoliberalism encourages the expansion of state-supported market forces over commitment to social change.

To understand how teacher agency was co-opted in this era, we must look at the research that describes how neoliberalism affected the notion of teacher agency. Charter schools, to be sure, grew dramatically by virtue of these neoliberal policies—not by virtue of the original teacher democratization efforts that gave birth to the idea of charters (Smith, 2001). The goal of Higginson (1996) and Delors (1996) was to unveil the contradictions between recognition of the importance of teachers and leaving them out of all decision-making in education reform. Archer (1984) has helped us understand the manner in which we may explore the definition of agency. Archer has noted the following essential elements of teacher agency: (a) obligations, (b) authority, and (c) autonomy as the cornerstone. Instead of reducing agency to a singular category, we must appreciate agency as characterized by multiplicity. For Sinclair (1999), teacher agency should not be thought of as a binary reaction to structural reforms, but rather as a complex concept that responds to global transformation through multiple manifestations (Sinclair, 1999).

The latter research thread is key to establishing the historical contexts in which teacher agency has been assaulted and in which globalization and the effects of neoliberalism on education have provoked a new, de-intellectualized conception of teacher work (Ozga, 1995). This new type of teacher is called upon to meet the market needs of globalization. Explicating the nuances of this phenomenon, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have put forth a description of teachers as complex and troublesome agents whose actions cannot be controlled through regulations and structural developments.

As evidenced by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), neoliberalism places great emphasis on school policies aimed at socializing future workers (Reese, 2002). Apple (2006) has noted that it is impossible to believe that neoliberalism can dismantle teacher agency by virtue of its favoring choice and competition over equality and equity. Thus far, however, the research has not pointed to any counterforces that have been able to regulate the proliferation and intrusion of neoliberal ideology into education. Ultimately, teachers have been objectified and forced to meet the global needs of a market economy. As Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have pointed out, a new way of thinking about teacher agency in the neoliberal era is necessary.

Reclamation of Teacher Political Agency

In spite of neoliberalism's impact on education and its attempts to destroy, co-opt, and redesign teacher agency by limiting teacher input in public schooling, Mussman (2006) has argued that educators can reclaim the lost autonomy. As a whole, Mussman, has described a set of exercises and activities that can help teachers develop collaborative skills as they seek to regain an understanding of their role in a society ravaged by neoliberalism. The steps that teacher would go through include (a) Authentic Teaching; (b) Collaborative Classrooms; (c)

Commitment to Uncover Inequity; (d) Promoting Student Collaboration; and, lastly, (e) Promoting Group Facilitations on Power. Given the intrusion of neoliberal ideology, Gutmann, (1999) has argued that it is vital that teachers reclaim their positions as political agents of change that can stop the exploitation of impoverished communities of color. Stern (2008) and Sasseen (2008) have gone on to argue that teachers can participate in the creation of critical frameworks that help students understand and transform their world, instead of merely preparing them to work in it.

The pioneering work of McLaren (1998) can incite a recuperation of the political agency of teachers, function as the basis for a critical challenge to the traditional distribution of power within American society, and serve as the foundation for social change. This notion of political agency developed out of the larger tradition of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is particularly concerned with issues of power and the manner in which race, class, gender, ideology, education, and other social institutions have created the current social context (McLaren, 1998). If they were to adopt this conception of political agency, teachers could expose the current imbalance in power relations, distinguishing the "haves" and "have nots" of power, and discussing how to rectify these oppressive inequities.

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) is another seminal text on the subject of developing teachers as political agents. Freire has pointed out the teacher's responsibility to avoid carrying out further oppression by striving toward facilitation instead of authoritarian instruction. Freire has argued that when teachers see their roles beyond content delivery, they can work to politically counter the current state of oppression and work toward freedom (Freire, 1970). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire has described that the teacher as political actor was

the only way teachers could tap into the local social context—a pivotal arena for capturing the attention of learners. Freire (1970) conceived of a pedagogy in which teachers would be political agents alongside students, becoming cocritics of the prevailing societal conditions (Freire, 1970).

For Freire, the notion of teacher political agency must also work to correct the inequities between oppressed teachers and oppressive administrators within their schools and districts as well as in the education profession itself. According to Freire (1970), only through critical activities that politically contextualize all school activity will the oppressed and the oppressors come to understand the extent of the unequal relations of power and how to rectify them. Clearly, teachers working as political agents of change can begin to transform American society in their classrooms.

McLaren (1998) has argued that a very different conception of the teaching profession has emerged to address anti-teacher accountability measures. By virtue of the accountability measures that ebb and flow in education, teachers must be creative in their efforts to adhere to a sense of political agency (McLaren, 1998). Goodman (2004) has pointed out that the rise of anti-teacher or "teacher-proof" curriculum reflects a national effort to undermine the decision-making power and political agency of teachers with specific respect to their ability to critique and deconstruct institutional domination. Lipman (2004), in a study of Chicago Public Schools, found that only teachers who had a social-justice philosophy informing their political agency were able to subvert the test-prep mandates of the district, state, and federal government. Teachers who were confident in their application of political agency and a social justice mission were able to engage their students with a more meaningful approach to instruction.

Teacher Intellectual Agency?

The research has clearly pointed out that we must distinguish between how teachers need to become purposeful political agents of change who wish to work in collaborative processes and how they must also carry out intellectual transformations by virtue of their participation in curricular and pedagogical decision-making (Smylie, 1992). Smylie has argued that although individual teachers are often promoted to administration tracks when they participate in school decision-making, they often fail to effectively transform the manner in which other teachers participate collectively. Smylie (1992) has also argued that political change in and of itself (by virtue of the expansion of teacher leadership opportunities) must include a cultural or intellectual element whereby teacher contributions in schools are recognized as more than just contributions from positions of political power (Smylie, 1992).

In *Teachers as Intellectuals* (1988), Giroux has made the bold statement that teachers should think of themselves as transformative intellectuals. Giroux has written that the transformative intellectual is an activist and agent of change who seeks to include schools as intellectually and ideologically contested spaces in which power relations subtly take shape. For Giroux, the transformative intellectual carries out the academic work that can lead to political change. In essence, Giroux has argued that we must be able to thoroughly unmask the reality that the educational process is often a struggle over the minds of young people. An intellectual, for Giroux, can aim to be an advocate for liberation by problematizing and historicizing the educational system. An intellectual questions standards, textbooks, and testing from a critical epistemological framework.

An intellectual, in Giroux's framework, operates with a philosophy of education that expresses unwavering concern for the suffering and subjugation experienced by the disadvantaged and dominated.

Similarly, for McLaren (1998), schools are sites in which a teacher can carry out the work of an intellectual agent as well as of a political intellectual. McLaren has described the work of educators as centered on an intellectual notion of "meaning-making." Teachers should work in impoverished communities of color, ready and determined to unmask all of the oppressive discourses that subjugate and objectify young people of color. A teacher informed by an intellectual framework can convert classrooms into spaces in which young people dialogue about the need for social change as a mental activity that can lead to political action. Once that process begins, Giroux and McLaren (1994) have argued, a teacher begins to manifest an identity that functions as a political agent and a cultural worker. A cultural worker, in essence, resembles what Giroux has described as a transformative intellectual (Giroux & McLaren, 1994). Above all, teachers, McLaren has argued, must build the kind of solidarity necessary to promoting the imperatives of freedom and liberation in the classroom. McLaren has explained that teachers can begin to deconstruct the subtle yet pervasive force of White privilege and how it undermines the possibility of an equal and democratic society. The caveat in McLaren theorizing is that teachers should avoid essentializing or using "narratives of authenticity" to describe experiences of the "other." In other words, the teacher as intellectual must be willing to confront the oppressive nature of whiteness while acknowledging the multiplicity of perspectives from the oppressed. In the end, Giroux and McLaren (1994) have pointed to the need for an intellectual crossing of borders to forge collaborative change.

Conclusion

Giroux's (1986) call for teachers to be agents of change in both the political and intellectual sense is an appropriate launching point for this study of how urban charter school teachers describe their perspectives of decision-making processes. Although the research on neoliberalism may be a starting point for explaining the limits on the liberatory potential of teacher agency in a charter school, very little research has attended to the efforts to reclaim both the teacher-centered aspects of charters and the recasting of a viable conception of teacher agency in charters. At a time in which charter schools have yet to adequately figure out how to tap into teacher talent, this study can perhaps illuminate ways that teacher input can be better accessed by charter schools.

To grasp the gravity of this work, we may look to Said (1994), who has reminded us, "governments still manifestly oppress people, grave miscarriages of justice still occur, the co-optation and inclusion of intellectuals by power can still effectively quiet their voices, and the deviation of intellectuals from their vocation is still very often the case"— a startling reminder for us to look closely in this study at the degree to which teachers can carry out such a sublime and worthwhile endeavor. Because Conley (1991) has reminded of the need for further research to determine what decisions must be made by teachers and/or administrators in *contested ground,* perhaps this study can provide a framework for both charter leaders and teachers to reclaim the original intention of charter legislation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Introduction

This research was an attempt to capture teacher perspectives of the decision-making processes at a progressive urban charter school. Although there are countless charter high schools in America, Weedpatch Charter School (WCS) was one of a limited number of progressive charter schools that employed authentic/inclusive approaches to instruction. WCS seemed to be a good source of fresh teacher perspectives on the decision-making processes at a progressive charter school. The significance of such work is paramount because the study points to new conceptions of democratic decision-making, which are currently in short supply in the world of charter schools.

Organization of the Study

Premise

Given this era of unprecedented teacher bashing, a closer look at how teachers are involved in curricular and pedagogical decision-making can inform future democratization efforts.

Two-Pronged Study

A narrative inquiry was conducted at an urban charter school that featured a progressive curriculum and pedagogy to reengage out-of-school youth.

Critical discourse analysis was conducted on the Pre-CAM and CAM Manual in order to unveil the ideology that drove decision-making during both eras.

Research Questions

- What are the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at an urban charter school?
- How do teachers understand these decision-making processes?
- How can those understandings inform more inclusive curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes?

Methodologies (Narrative Inquiry and Critical Discourse Analysis)

Qualitative Triangulation

The researcher conducted a narrative inquiry beginning with individual interviews with six teachers. A series of 8 to 10 open-ended questions was prepared in order to take the conversations wherever the participants desired. No observations were conducted because the study focus was on their perspectives not on their practices. Interviews consisted of three one- to two-hour-long interviews of each teacher and an interview with the founder and CEO of WCS, Jim Rawley Collins.

Additionally, a focus group was formed with three of those six teachers to further dissect issues that had surfaced in the interviews.

Lastly, a critical discourse analysis was conducted of the Graduation Plus Summer Training Manual, Graduation Plus Course Designs, and Graduation Plus ALT prompts. Because WCS had moved on from using the Graduation Plus model to a teacher-developed model, analysis of the WCS Collaborative and Authentic Education Manual (CAM Manual), which had replaced the Graduation Plus approach, also took place. The CAM Manual included training and templates recently developed by WCS teachers for WCS teachers. The researcher compared and

contrasted the two manuals to evaluate WCS teacher perceptions of both approaches to instruction. The specific focus of the document analysis was on the effectiveness of Graduation Plus compared to the WCS teacher-created CAM Manual in terms of affording teacher agency.

Narrative Inquiry

The narrative inquiry model prioritizes, encourages, and allows participants to narrate their own stories. Understandings and meanings are not direct, but are negotiated between the researcher and the narrating participant (Casey, 1995). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have argued, a narrative inquiry often unveils the endless subjectivities and multiplicities that present counter-stories to a master narrative.

Although often autobiographical and seemingly subjective, a narrative inquiry is grounded by themes and an exhaustive literature review. Whereas these interests in particular themes demonstrate the preferences of the researcher, they serve only as the impetus to sets of open-ended questions (Casey, 1995). Narrative inquiry is perhaps the only way to value the marginalized voices that are so often treated as second-class narratives (Casey, 1995). A well-executed narrative inquiry is firmly grounded not only in a literature review and the commitment to accurately collecting the stories, but also in the willingness to honor narrated stories through repeated analysis and retelling of those narratives. Retelling for both analysis and meaning is the basis upon which a narrative inquiry rests (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray-Orr, 2007).

Dewey (1938) prioritized experience as the basis for an educational system; experience is likewise the foundation of a narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) pioneered narrative inquiry as a form of research that blends accepted academic understanding of the world and newly discovered narratives in an effort to counter master narratives.

Because the manner in which material emerged was very unmediated and was facilitated by narrative inquiry, this study was not an attempt to assign variables upfront but rather to organically arrive at the context of the situation and to understand the meaning that people attach to social phenomena (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative Inquiry Data Analysis Process

Reorganizing the data involved incorporating a curricular layout in which interviews and documents were matched to each participant. Then there was immersion in the data, at which time all of the interviews and documents were reviewed multiple times to facilitate my understanding of the participants' perspectives and to arrive at insights provided by document review. Next, I generated categories and themes, which were informed by the conceptual framework of *teacher agency*. I then questioned and reflected upon the interviews and documents in order to find key themes and patterns that would allow for a more thorough understanding of the data.

The next step, coding the data, afforded new understandings, which emerged by virtue of standardizing and abbreviating the data. Writing analytic memos was my next step. I recorded my thoughts and insights via analytic memos that allowed for a more dynamic, creative, and meaningful approach to understanding the data. To offer my own interpretation, I took note of all conclusions derived from this data analysis process.

I repeatedly challenged my own conclusions and the understandings that I derived from the data, evaluated their veracity, and incorporated them into a larger framework that served as the cornerstone of my search for alternative understandings. Ultimately, the conclusive statements that surfaced served as direct responses to the research questions posed in this study.

Narrative Inquiry Interview Process

The interviews were structured thematically. Although they were semi-structured in the following broad themes, the open-ended questions intended to derive understandings that were truly theirs, not my own. The individual and focus group interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

- Theme One: General perspectives on decision-making

Sample Question One: Generally speaking, what role do you think teachers currently should play in curricular decision-making?

Sample Question Two: What is your understanding of teacher participation in curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS?

- Theme Two: Past success and difficulty with teacher decision-making

Sample Question One: Describe some instances in which you effectively collaborated on decision-making and others where you struggled.

Sample Question Two: Why do you think you may have had unsuccessful experiences with regard to teacher collaboration at WCS?

- Theme Three: Ideal process and structures to allow for teacher input in decision-making.

Sample Question One: What do you think is an ideal process or structure for teachers to effectively participate in curricular decision-making?

Sample Question Two: How can more charter school leaders and developers feel comfortable about teacher input in curricular decision-making?

Interpretive Analysis of Narratives

Data collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions were then analyzed via an interpretive analysis. By virtue of this process, narrative data were coded and tied together with vignettes. The individual interview data were also coded to allow for thematic focus group discussion. This approach to research was an attempt to interpret and explain what another person/author said (in this case, what WCS teachers said). The interpretive analysis ultimately sought to weave together the individual narratives to determine the nature of the oppressive forces against teachers (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1986; Erickson, 1986).

Critical Discourse Analysis

This study used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to identify the ideological underpinnings of decision-making at WCS, which effectively situated the teacher understandings discussed in Chapter Five on narrative inquiry.

Document analysis via critical discourse analysis (CDA) helped provide insight into the ideological underpinnings in two distinct time periods at WCS. Although CDA can be used for rhetorical and strategic critiques, the predominant form of critique for this study was ideological (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Given that CDA is only useful when applied to the right setting, emphasizing the appropriateness of CDA is crucial for this study, which seeks to identify the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS.

The Pre-CAM and CAM Contexts

In its first three years of operation, WCS employed a slightly modified version of the Graduation Plus curriculum and instruction model. As the director of curriculum and instruction during that time, I was responsible for a unilateral approach to curricular and pedagogical

decision-making. Although I infused more layers of social justice education into Graduation Plus, decisions were completely centralized. Graduation Plus is a project-based educational resource that provides its clients with both a training manual and follow-up coaching for project-based learning according to the Graduation Plus model. According to this model, a student completed projects for credits because all WCS classes were organized around authentic learning tasks (ALTs). The ALTs showcased applied skills and knowledge for the solution to teacher/student identified problems. Although Graduation Plus was a good alternative to the test prep "learning" of the NCLB era of high stakes accountability, the education model was still packaged with foci developed exclusively by the Graduation Plus staff. A large portion of the training manual addressed how to use their templates and the Graduation Plus competencies, which were all prepackaged.

The CAM Era (Collaborative and Authentic Manual)

In February of 2011, after three years of using the approach mentioned above, WCS decided to move from this packaged approach to a more progressive style of project-based learning, created in collaboration with WCS teachers. The decision was made because enough teachers had organically observed aspects of the old model that seemed counter to the progressive mission and vision of WCS in the following ways: (a) The goals of the project-based learning were prepackaged; and (b) The fact that Graduation Plus was a curriculum company meant that teacher voices were not included in the curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS.

When it became clear that Graduation Plus was no longer willing to support WCS's departure from Graduation Plus expectations, a group of teachers came forward to lead the

development of a revamped version that would access all staff input. After a WCS Committee formed, the work to develop a teacher-owned manual and training process officially began in March 2011, and concluded with an implementation of the CAM manual in time for fall 2011.

To be very clear for the remainder of this study: I will refer to teacher understandings as Pre-CAM or CAM. Notably, as the only decision-maker regarding curriculum and instruction before the CAM era, I always had a goal of opening up the decision-making to include teachers; the ultimate result was that all curricular and pedagogical decision-making was assumed by the teachers.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a Framework

Critical discourse analysis was employed to discover the ideology of pedagogical and curricular decision-making in the Pre-CAM and CAM eras at WCS.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an appropriate lens for revealing the subtle sources of power and oppression, and how they support existing and new power relations (Luke, 1997). Because CDA stipulates that both written and oral texts convey powerful messages, such texts were an appropriate way to interpret and identify the ideological underpinnings at WCS in the Pre-CAM and CAM eras.

The following are the specific texts that were analyzed to identify the ideological underpinnings at WCS: (a) The Graduation Plus (GP) Manual; and (b) The Collaborative and Authentic Manual (CAM). These two documents were the best textual representations of the ideological underpinnings at WCS with regard to curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

According to Fairclough (2003), critical discourse analysis (CDA) unveils discourse and ideology through textual analysis. Although CDA has multiple variances, the focus in this study was

on how a change effort like the shift from Pre-CAM to CAM involved a discursive or ideological transformation. In essence, the details of the shift and an articulation of the essential elements of the pedagogical and curricular differences served as the basis for identifying the ideological underpinnings of each era (Fairclough, 2003).

The use of CDA to identify the ideological underpinnings of the respective eras was relevant because the changes at WCS were situated within the historical context of massive transformation in public education. Although the literature review in Chapter Two of this study pointed to the forces of neoliberalism as playing vital roles in the educational developments of the past two decades, the climate of WCS was so different from the standard charter school dynamic that it necessitated in-depth analysis as articulated by CDA.

Given the multiple disciplines at play in educational discourse and ideology (economics, politics, sociology), CDA was more capable of unveiling and identifying the multi-centered nature of domination (Sum & Jessop, 2001). The ideological underpinnings at WCS were in flux with regard to pedagogical and curricular decision-making, locating, and identifying them in this process of transformation; as such, a trans-disciplinary approach helped account for the manner in which changes in structure can also relate to changes in ideology and vice versa (Sum & Jesop, 2001).

Coding Based on Giroux's *Teachers as Intellectuals*

Coding of the contrasting instances in the two manuals was based on the key terms outlined in Henry Giroux's (1988) *Teachers as Intellectuals.* Giroux's work was relevant to this research because *teacher agency* was the guiding framework for the narrative inquiry of teacher understanding of curricular and pedagogical decision-making. In the study's CDA of ideology at WCS before and after the teachers had become involved with curricular and pedagogical

decision-making, Giroux's work helped to set-up the coding of instances that were used to initiate the analysis. The key terms in Giroux's work are *intellectual, critical, collaboration,* and *liberation.*

Setting

Weedpatch Charter School Core Principles

To describe the school setting, it is best to begin with the foundational principles of The Weedpatch Charter School (WCS). WCS was dedicated to the mission of preparing young people to counter the social inequities that exist in impoverished communities. Unfortunately, traditional schools take approaches to learning that reinforce and reproduce inequality, prejudice, and discrimination, which benefit some members of society and not others. Whether it is overemphasizing standardized testing, textbooks, or lecturing, these approaches function as some of the root causes of the dropout crisis. WCS prefers to "RECLAIM" the human right for young people to be leaders in their chosen fields and agents of social change. WCS used authentic assessments as the signature approach to instruction in order to allow young people to acquire knowledge in context and to apply this knowledge to propose new and innovative solutions to the problems of our world.

WCS believed that every single young person should be treated as though he or she is on a leadership path and that the teacher's only role is to facilitate the process. In the end, the key for WCS was that young people are not broken and in need of repair; instead WCS wanted to point out to young people that our social systems are in need of reform and that they can be active agents in transforming society.

The core principles of WCS served to maintain the central mission and vision of the school at all times. They are listed below and come from the following categories: Philosophy of education, project-based approach, postsecondary opportunities, leadership development, caring teachers, alternative approach to discipline, and commitment to social change.

> 1) RECLAIMING the Right to an authentic education that will prepare me to counter social inequities and historical forces of oppression.
> 2) RECLAIMING the Right to be a creator of new knowledge in an engaging and contextual project based curriculum.
> 3) RECLAIMING the Right to pursue meaningful postsecondary opportunities.
> 4) RECLAIMING the Right to take my place as a socially responsible leader who reflectively collaborates with all community members.
> 5) RECLAIMING the Right to have caring and supportive teachers who always express a sincere interest in my life.
> 6) RECLAIMING the Right to be an active participant in restorative justice in which we cooperate to change things *with* each other rather than do things *to* each other or *for* each other.
> 7) RECLAIMING the Right to play a meaningful role in creating positive social change. (Weedpatch School Brochure, 2010)

Description of the School

Weedpatch Charter School was an alternative school for 16- to 24-year-olds who had either dropped out or been pushed out from traditional academic environments. WCS students attended school full-time during a trimester-aligned year in which they could earn up to 90 credits toward their high school diploma.

For WCS sites that had attained federal grant funding through the Weedpatch program, students attended school on alternate weeks, and otherwise worked on community service projects that provided them vocational and leadership training, and gave them valuable job experience. WCS developed out of a directive request from Weedpatch USA. Weedpatch USA was a community-focused development program that offered low-income youth an opportunity

to work toward their high school diplomas while learning job skills and serving their communities through the construction of affordable housing. At the time of this study, there were 273 Weedpatch programs in the United States, each of which was paired with a local school to provide educational services. In 2007, driven by a desire to see its service and education components more properly wedded, Weedpatch USA called for the development of a charter school for the California Weedpatch programs. Jim Rawley Collins, a former director at the LA Environmental Youthforce, answered the call and founded Weedpatch Charter School, which as of the 2011–2012 school year was comprised of 12 school sites, serving approximately 1,200 students throughout Southern and Central California. With the development of a complementary school-model, students who pass through WCS become members of a long-term community, in which positive relationships are sustained beyond graduation through the Weedpatch Alumni Association. Through its partnership with Weedpatch USA, WCS ensures that sufficient professional and academic opportunities are made available for the young people.

Demographics

At the time of this study, WCS consisted of 750 students, spread out among seven school sites. There were between 80 and 100 students, four teachers, a registrar, at least one counselor, and varying numbers of support staff per site. WCS partnered with community organizations, most of which had attained the Weedpatch grant, and operated within their facilities. Though WCS worked closely with its partner organizations, it was a separate entity with its own funding and administrative staff.

Due to WCS's intensive program and ability to award up to 90 credits per academic year, its students were on an accelerated program, many of whom were completing their credits and

graduating within nine months. Student populations were sustained by a constant influx of new students, many recommended by WCS graduates or school guidance counselors. Some Weedpatch sites actively recruited through promotion at community events, or by going door to door in public housing projects.

The final goal of WCS, above awarding diplomas, was to create a new generation of urban leaders, who would take their lessons back to the community to address the issues that negatively impacted their lives and those of their loved ones. WCS believed that young people are not a burden, but a resource. This belief, combined with the practical benefits of a high school diploma and verifiable work experience, ensured that WCS's impact reached far beyond the individual lives of its students.

WCS Curricular and Pedagogical Practices

WCS teachers and students were engaged in a cooperative learning process. As such, every stage of the student's progress was planned and measured as part of a collaborative effort among the student, teacher, parent, and school counselor (Weedpatch Charter School Brochure, 2010). WCS counselors designed an individualized credit track for each student, so that missing credits were efficiently attained. Due to this arrangement, WCS schools had no division of grade levels. A student just a few credits shy of graduation may have needed to take algebra, so he or she took algebra, and the rest of their schedule accommodated this need. WCS employed a slightly modified version of the Graduation Plus credit attainment system. Credits were offered in units of five throughout 12-week periods. In this way, a student could conceivably earn up to 90 credits per academic year, almost twice the number typically earned in a traditional school. Classes were organized around authentic assessments called authentic learning tasks (ALTs),

which showcased applied skills and knowledge for solving meaningful problems. For example, students in algebra may learn to plot graphs through the design and planning of an urban transit system in their community. The age-old complaint of "When will I ever use this?" was thus answered through the address of real-world problems and concerns. Each class had three ALT projects, the completion of which earned the maximum of five credits. Teachers designed the projects in collaboration with the students, ensuring the student interest was piqued and that standards requirements were satisfied. WCS's collaborative spirit extended far beyond the classroom—though students were always the focus (Weedpatch Charter School Brochure, 2010).

Teachers met with counselors at the end of each trimester to review the progress of individual students and to ensure that they remained on track. If needed, single classroom environments could be integrated to fulfill a variety of credit requirements, thanks to the innovative ALT model. For example, a single social studies teacher could administer and oversee projects that fulfilled a variety of different standards requirements, as each project was custom-designed for the student completing it. The school registrars, in partnership with the counselors, tracked daily attendance to ensure that students met requirements in this regard as well. As stated earlier, counselors also reached out to other community organizations with an investment in the students, such as Social Services, probation officers, or the Department of Family and Children's Services.

Furthermore, all WCS teachers met annually to receive training in the Graduation Plus model, and all WCS sites had Skype access to facilitate training sessions and inter-site communication. Actual classroom practices hinged on the development of the fundamental skill-sets most necessary for personal growth and professional attainment. The key term at all times

was *applicability*: How can this education practically benefit the life of the student and prepare him or her for a postsecondary education or entry into a professional career? Teachers crafted classroom material in such a way as to reflect the local social context. In addition to the mathematics example cited above, an English teacher might use a principal text as an opportunity to discuss societal issues relevant to the students, such as "Does race or gender affect one's ability to realize the American Dream?" History students were encouraged to access prior historical knowledge to promote current social, economic, and cultural progress.

WCS Teacher Input on Curriculum and Pedagogy

Although the latter description was necessary to situate the study, the focus of this study was not on WCS but rather on the understanding that a group of teachers had regarding the curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes at WCS. The teachers that participated in this narrative inquiry were all employed by Weedpatch (WCS) and their participation in this study served two purposes: (a) the completion of this study and (b) having their understandings inform how teacher input can be further democratized.

Participants

Although Weedpatch Charter School was only in its fourth year of existence, the teacher participants were selected for this study only if they had been hired prior to the change over to the CAM Manual. This foundational selection criterion was key because it allowed for teachers to have the frame of reference to understand the changes that had taken place at WCS regarding the curricular and pedagogical decision-making. Secondly, it was important to insure that none of the teachers was under my direct supervision. Although curriculum and instruction was spread across all of the WCS schools that fell under the umbrella of WCS, only teachers who

worked for the WCS central sites were selected because another principal formally supervised them.

School Founder

Jim Rawley Collins, a former director at the LA Environmental Youthforce, started WCS in an effort to better match the youth development goals of Weedpatch USA. In the past, many Weedpatch programs had partnered with the local district or other charter schools, but the fit was never adequate. With his background in developing a charter school for the LA Youthforce, Rawley Collins had experience developing a school component was well matched to its nonprofit partner. Much of this ability to adapt and be flexible with schooling alternatives traces back to Rawley Collins's undergraduate days when he devised a major program of his own choosing that was a blend of comparative literature and area studies. The latter interest developed out of his experience in study abroad programs in Spain and France. Before launching WCS, Rawley Collins consulted for Weedpatch International and had been a long-time member of the American Youth Work Coalition.

Teachers

Martha Valdez. Martha was a third-year social studies teacher who had completed a master's degree and a social studies teaching credential. She was a graduate of an inner city high school in the San Fernando Valley. She blended her leadership and activism experience with her lessons, which featured alternative interpretations of history, economics, and government.

Marco Toscano. Marco was a second-year social studies teacher who had completed a social studies teaching credential at Bay Area State College. Marco had always been active in community-based organizations that advocate for the Latino community and continued to do so.

Marco's lessons always fused authentic assessments with social responsibility in innovative ways that often featured service components.

Tim East. Tim was a third-year math teacher who had completed his teaching credential at State College of New York. Before working for WCS, Tim worked at another dropout recovery school where his passion and commitment to alternative schooling was cemented. The latter experience inspired him to discover alternative approaches to teaching math to young people.

Roxanne Long. Roxanne was in her third year of teaching English. Roxanne also had a supplemental foreign language credential in French, which she earned from College of California, Fullerton. Roxanne firmly believed that community-based organizations could make inroads into educational justice in ways that comprehensive schools never could. Roxanne spent some time working for a school run by a well-known charter school management organization, after which she vowed never to work again at a school that was obsessed with standardized testing.

Tracy Phelps. Tracy was a second-year teacher at WCS. She earned her teaching credential at the California College of West Los Angeles. Before joining WCS, she spent several years working for various community-based organizations that advocated for the Latino community. Tracy was committed to only using her talents in impoverished communities of color, because she felt that they were the very places in which talented educators should be working.

Felicia Mendez. Felicia received here undergraduate degree from the Manila College of Education. In addition to having a master's degree and a teaching credential in science, Felicia

has taught university courses in teacher education. At Manila College, Felicia developed a progressive outlook on instruction that came out of her work in the Philippines.

Conceptual Framework: Teacher Agency

The conceptual framework employed in this narrative inquiry was *teacher agency.* Teacher agency, in this specific context, is a curricular and pedagogical resistance to the global market forces that currently impact impoverished communities of color. Ultimately, teacher agency includes the right to be autonomous to teach the kind of curriculum that can liberate young people from oppressive and global market forces.

Over the past two decades, multinational corporations have spearheaded a dramatic increase in the global pursuit profit beyond traditional notions of political boundaries and economic regulations. This globalization has had direct impact on the work of teachers in the American educational system (Sinclair, 1999). Sinclair (1999) has concluded that globalization greatly diminishes the potential for teachers to incorporate their agency to resist those forces. If teachers do not enlist their agency to counter global forces of capital that are decimating impoverished communities of color, they will be reduced to mere robots who obediently facilitate the consolidation of globalization.

However, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have reminded us that conceptions of teacher agency should not be romanticized into a binary between the universal notion of teacher agency and oppressive structures. This study did not attempt to convert these teacher understandings of decision-making in order to essentialize and romanticize the experience of teachers (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988). Indeed, it sought to capture the multiplicity of teacher perspectives and to respect the contextual responses to the market forces that have overwhelmed education.

A conceptual framework featuring teacher agency posits that this notion of a teacher-self cannot be separated from the context of power relations. Highlighting teacher agency in this context can lead to a more critical understanding of those decision-making processes at WCS that and to effectively discuss their inclusiveness (Block, 1995; Morris et al., 1999). A guiding principle of this study was that a dialectical potential for new modes of teacher agency could emanate even out of the historically anti-teacher charter movement.

Positionality

My role in this narrative inquiry was to allow for subjective storytelling to take place and to avoid essentializing any experiences. In a narrative inquiry, storytelling allows for a better understanding of the multiplicity of perspectives regarding subjugation. Narrative inquiry placed me in a position of story collector because the goal of a narrative inquiry is to allow research participants to put their experiences into their own words, which allows for an unveiling of the common forces of domination. Consistent with the model of narrative inquiry, no attempt was made to predefine variables but rather to acknowledge the varied social contexts and human experiences.

Because WCS was growing at an accelerated pace, at the time of this study two schools were under the umbrella of WCS. The second school (WCS Central) had a separate principal who supervised the teachers at sites, and I'm the principal of the original WCS sites in Greater Los Angeles. In the interest of protecting the teachers who participated in this study, the decision was made to only include employees of WCS Central that were not under my supervision.

Teachers from both schools had recently come together to form a committee entitled the WCS Curriculum and Instruction Committee. The committee was created organically when Graduation Plus was no longer partnered with WCS as its curriculum provider. Because enough teachers had observed a variety of gaps in Graduation Plus, they stepped up to create an enhanced version of project-based learning that was more culturally responsive, interdisciplinary, and contextual. This study was an attempt to capture the perspectives of WCS Central teachers in both the Graduation Plus era and the era in which the WCS Curriculum and Instruction Committee had taken control of curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Confidentiality

In accordance with the California Health and Safety Code 24172, all research participants were made aware of the following rights: Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of this study and given exact explanations regarding the appropriate use of any of their comments, interview responses, and general contributions. Participants were told that they would be protected from any potential risks, if any, of participating in the research process, specifically as they pertained to their employment status with WCS. The significance of any and all potential benefits derived from the study was thoroughly addressed for all participants. At all times, research participants were made aware that they could ask any questions regarding the study and all of its relevant procedures. Participants were also provided with and signed a consent form in addition to being advised that they could withdrawal from the study at any given time without fear of any coercion, force, or other research-related retaliation (LMU IRB Bill of Rights, 2011). The names of the schools and all participants were also changed for confidentiality.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Introduction

For purposes of this study, the logic behind Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was to identify the ideological underpinnings of decision-making at WCS so as to effectively situate teacher understandings (discussed in Chapter Five). Although the following distinctions between the Pre-CAM ideology and the CAM era ideology appear to be evidence of contentious developments, the manner in which this ideological shift occurred was remarkably smooth. The latter speaks both to the fact that WCS teachers who participated in that shift abided by the highest levels of diplomacy and that the WCS leadership encouraged transformation without ever overriding teacher decisions. I know how this process unfolded because I was always welcomed and invited to the teacher meetings. Although it may be odd for school leadership to initiate a democratization effort in this era of high stakes accountability, the success of the teacher effort was only possible because it was a development that was fostered.

Document analysis via critical discourse analysis (CDA) helped provide an answer to the ideological underpinnings in two distinct time periods at WCS. Although CDA can be used for rhetorical and strategic critiques, the predominant form of critique for this study was ideological (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Given that CDA is only useful if applied to the right setting, emphasizing the appropriateness of CDA is crucial, as this chapter seeks to identify the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS.

In its first three years of operation, WCS employed a slightly modified version of the Graduation Plus curriculum and instruction model, which is referred to here as the Pre-CAM era.

As the director of curriculum and instruction during that time, I was responsible for a unilateral approach to the curricular and pedagogical decision-making. Although I infused more elements of social justice education into Graduation Plus, curriculum decisions were nonetheless completely centralized. Graduation Plus was project-based educational provider that offers its clients a training manual and follow up coaching for project-based learning according to the Graduation Plus program. According to this model, a student completed projects for credits because all WCS classes were organized around authentic learning tasks (ALTs). These ALTs showcased applied skills and knowledge to solve teacher/student-identified problems. Although Graduation Plus was certainly a good alternative to the test prep "learning" in the NCLB era of high stakes accountability, the education model was still developed exclusively by the Graduation Plus staff. A large portion of the training manual was about how to use their templates and to master the Graduation Plus competencies, which were all prepackaged.

In February of 2011, after three years of using the approach mentioned above, WCS decided to move from this packaged approach to a more progressive approach to project-based learning, which was created in collaboration with WCS teachers; the latter is referred to as The CAM era. The decision was made because enough teachers had organically observed aspects of the old model that seemed counter to the progressive mission and vision of WCS in the following ways: (a) The goals of the project-based learning were prepackaged, and (b) The fact that a curriculum company was determining content meant that teacher voices were not included in curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS.

When it became clear that Graduation Plus was no longer willing to support WCS's departure from Graduation Plus expectations, a group of teachers came forward to lead the

development of a revamped version that would access all staff input. In the end, changes to the curriculum allowed for a more culturally responsive approach to instruction, which would be carried out by a democratization of teacher input to those pedagogical decision-making processes. After a WCS Committee was formed, the work to develop a teacher-owned manual and training process officially began in March 2011 and concluded with an implementation of the CAM manual in time for fall 2011.

To be very clear for the remainder of this study, I will refer to teacher understandings as Pre-CAM or CAM, an important distinction because the findings show that teachers expressed extensive disillusionment in the Pre-CAM era and in the beginnings stages of agency in the CAM era.

Notably, as the only decision-maker regarding curriculum and instruction before the CAM era, I had the goal of opening up decision-making to include teachers, as it seemed contradictory to the WCS mission not to do so. The narrative inquiry revealed teacher frustration and disillusionment with unilateral decision-making, but concluded with how WCS teachers were able to overcome that situation with a very unique sense of agency. The latter made room for the CAM era of teacher ownership over curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a Framework

A critical discourse analysis was employed to discover the ideology of pedagogical and curricular decision-making in the Pre-CAM and CAM era at WCS.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an appropriate approach for revealing the subtle sources of power and oppression and how they become driving forces in supporting existing and new power relations (Luke, 1997). Because it stipulates that both written and oral texts convey powerful

messages, CDA was an appropriate way to interpret and identify the ideological underpinnings at WCS in the Pre-CAM and CAM era.

The following are the specific texts to be analyzed in order to identify the ideological underpinnings at WCS: (a) The Graduation Plus (GP) Manual and (b) The Collaborative and Authentic Manual (CAM). These two documents offered the best textual representations of the ideological underpinnings at WCS with regard to curricular and pedagogical and decision-making.

According to Fairclough (2003), Critical discourse analysis (CDA) unveils discourse and ideology by virtue of a textual analysis. Although CDA has multiple variances, the focus of this study was on how a change effort like the shift from Pre-CAM to CAM included a discursive or ideological transformation. In essence, the details of the shift and an articulation of the essential elements of the pedagogical and curricular differences provide the basis for identifying the ideological underpinnings of each era Fairclough (2003).

Using CDA to identify the ideological underpinnings of the respective eras was appropriate because the changes at WCS were situated within the historical context of a massive transformation in public education. Although the literature review in Chapter Two of this study points to the forces of neoliberalism as playing a vital role in the educational developments of the past two decades, the context at WCS was so different from the standard charter school dynamics that it necessitated in-depth analysis made possible by CDA. As described in Chapter Three of this study, WCS was a dropout recovery charter that supported a Weedpatch partner program, thus making it significantly different from charters that are setup to directly compete with traditional schools. This unique dynamic required the kind of in-depth ideological analysis enabled by CDA.

Given the multiple disciplines at play when looking at educational discourse and ideology (economics, politics, sociology), CDA is a more capable of unveiling and identifying the multi-centered nature of domination (Sum & Jessop, 2001). Because the ideological underpinnings at WCS were in flux with regard to pedagogical and curricular decision-making, locating and identifying them in this process of transformation, a "trans-disciplinary" approach helps to account for the manner in which changes in structure can also relate to changes in ideology, and vice versa (Sum & Jesop, 2001).

Ultimately, there is a dialectical relationship between the existing hegemony and the kind of counterhegemonic strategy necessary to counter it; that relationship is the focus of this study's CDA (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

CDA, Hegemony, and Counterhegemony

CDA to Unveil Hegemony

This study enlisted CDA to unveil the ideological underpinnings at WCS in the Pre-CAM and CAM era as examples of the manifestation of what Gramsci has called hegemony and "counter-hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971). For Gramsci, hegemony is characterized by the kind of domination that is not just outright political, economic, or coercive control, but also relies on the non-coercive deployment of a dominant discourse by such institutions as churches and schools.

Because the focus of this CDA was to identify the ideological underpinnings at WCS during two rather contrasting successive eras, the work of Gramsci (1971) helps identify the relationship between hegemonic and counterhegemonic ideologies. As Gramsci (1971) has argued, domination is pervasive and about more than just political forces or economic inequality; it also contains a cultural element, or, in this case, an ideological manifestation. This study has

no analysis of coercion or outright force, but rather focuses on the subtle traces of hegemony that repeatedly manifest themselves in texts.

CDA to Unveil Counterhegemony

In an effort to identify the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making, it must be noted that people actively participate in either carrying out the discourse of domination or, conversely, engaging counterhegemonic discourse in which they rework and contest the assumptions embedded in discourses (Fairclough, 1995). In the end, although these dominant discourses are pervasive and can certainly impact the lives of subjugated groups, CDA can analyze the manner in which those discourses are—and can be—resisted (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

Research Question

The question that is the focus of this CDA is Research Question 1: What are the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at an urban charter school?

Overview of the Data Analysis

Coding Based on Giroux's Teachers as Intellectuals

To determine the ideologies that were foundational to the two different decision-making eras at WCS, I based the contrasting ideological instances in the two manuals on the key terms outlined in Henry Giroux's (1988) *Teachers as Intellectuals*. Giroux's work was appropriate for this study because *teacher agency* was the guiding framework for the teacher understanding of the curricular and pedagogical decision-making. In this CDA of ideology at WCS before and after the teachers became involved with curricular and pedagogical decision-making, Giroux's

worked helped establish the coding of instances used to initiate the analysis. The key terms in Giroux's work are *intellectual, critical, collaboration,* and *liberation.* The table below shows the number of coding instances that best illustrate the differences between the two ideological eras.

Table 1

Number of Coding Instances

	CAM Manual	Grad Plus Manual
Intellectual	22	0
Critical	8	2
Collaborative	11	1
Liberation	31	0
TOTAL	72	3

Immersion in the Data

Using Giroux's terms to initiate this CDA, I analyzed the two respective teacher manuals to determine whether those key terms were present or lacking. By virtue of employing the terms *intellectual, critical, collaborative,* and *liberation* as guiding terms, I could then appropriately frame the findings to provide evidence of the ideological underpinnings during both eras. Each of the subsequent headings corresponds to one of the terms used by Giroux.

CDA Findings

Introduction

The two findings unveiled by this CDA were: (a) Pre-CAM Ideology: "Shadow State" Neoliberalism and (b) CAM Ideology: Gramscian Informal Education. Analysis of these two particular documents was employed a CDA framework, which required an understanding of hegemony. Gramsci has outlined his theory of hegemony as a blend of political society and civil

society. For Gramsci, these forces function in tandem to carry out hegemony, as explained in the following:

> By hegemony, Gramsci meant the permeation *throughout* society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations. Hegemony in this sense might be defined as an "organizing principle" that is diffused by the process of socialization into every area of daily life. To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the population it becomes part of what is generally called "common sense" so that the philosophy, culture and morality of the ruling elite comes to appear as the natural order of things . . . Marx's basic division of society into a base represented by the economic structure and a superstructure represented by the institutions and beliefs prevalent in society was accepted by most Marxists familiar with the concepts. Gramsci took this a step further when he divided the superstructure into those institutions that were overtly coercive and those that were not. The coercive ones, which were basically the public institutions such as the government, police, armed forces and the legal system he regarded as the state or **political society** and the non-coercive ones were the others such as the churches, the schools, trade unions, political parties, cultural associations, clubs, the family etc. which he regarded as **civil society**. To some extent, *schools could fit into both categories*. Parts of school life are quite clearly coercive (compulsory education, the national curriculum, national standards and qualifications) whilst others are not (the hidden curriculum). (Burke, 2005)

Because Gramsci has noted that "political society" can account for the rise of compulsory education and the national curriculum, the work of schooling can also be included as a non-coercive effort and fall under "civil society." Yet, the phenomenon at WCS went beyond even these two possibilities because Weedpatch programs were carrying out the kind of antipoverty work that is normally left to the government, an effort that demands further analysis of how that hegemony manifests even in antipoverty work that is carried out separate from the state.

Neoliberal "Shadow State" Hegemonic Ideology

By categorizing compulsory education within Gramsci's notion of *civil society,* the possibility of understanding how hegemony takes places is well established. Yet, the dynamic at play at WCS was a phenomenon related to neoliberal developments that cannot be explained entirely by the notion of *civil society.* Because WCS was a charter school is designed to serve

youth development organizations whose focus is to combat poverty, provide education, leadership, and job training, it had effectively taken on the tasks that have historically been the domain of the state. Michael Peters has explained it thusly:

> This process has been described as the emergence of a "shadow state:" the privatization of welfare through the contestability of funding and the contracting out of welfare provisions to a non-governmental informal sector, comprised of church-based groups, charity organizations, private foundations, and trusts, which increasingly administer "the poor" and "the disadvantaged" accordingly to set criteria and performance targets. It is the theme of "Responsibilizing the Self," a process at once economic and moral that is concomitant with a new tendency to invest in the self. (Peters, 2001 p. 91)

According to Peters, swayed by neoliberalism, the state has been able to consistently delegate the tasks that used to fall within the scope of the welfare state to the nonprofit sector. When the nonprofit sector or "shadow state" does not respond, the responsibilities fall to individuals to "pull themselves up by their boot-straps." However, when the "shadow state" is, in fact, interested in tackling tasks that used to be handled by the state, it does so in a competitive way. Thus, a market approach of supply, demand, and competition ends up being the driving force for carrying out social policy under the phenomenon of the "shadow state."

Gramscian Informal Education

For the purposes of unveiling the ideological foundations of the CAM era, it was necessary to move beyond the general descriptions of hegemony delineated by Gramsci to focus on the manner in which any hegemony can be resisted through a counterhegemonic effort. In education, such a counterhegemonic effort, for Gramsci, can be referred to as "informal education," which has been described in the following passage:

> Now, if Gramsci was correct that the ruling class maintained its domination by the consent of the mass of the people and only used its coercive apparatuses, the forces of law and order, as a last resort, what were the consequences for Marxists who wished to see the overthrow of that same ruling class? If the hegemony of the ruling capitalist class

> resulted from an ideological bond between the rulers and the ruled, what strategy needed to be employed? The answer to those questions was that those who wished to break that ideological bond had to counter the ruling class. They had to see structural change and ideological change as part of the same struggle. The labor process was at the core of the class struggle but it was the ideological struggle that had to be addressed if the mass of the people were to come to a consciousness that allowed them to question their political and economic masters right to rule. It was popular consensus in civil society that had to be challenged and in this we can see a role for informal education. (Burke, 2005).

The latter kind of "informal education" has been at the ideological core of curricular and pedagogical decision-making in the CAM era. This phenomenon developed out of a unanimous consensus from schoolteachers and WCS leadership that the direction of instruction at WCS was neither beneficial to students nor in line with a progressive effort. In providing a counter to the "shadow state" ideology, the teachers carried out something so alternative and emancipatory that it resembled an informal education more so than any state-mandated and bureaucratically endorsed formal education.

Shadow State Neoliberalism via Graduation Plus

Teachers as Content Experts (Not Intellectuals)

WCS teachers under the Graduation Plus (GP) model certainly enjoyed the move beyond the "test prep" approaches that dominate the era of high stakes accountability (Kohn, 2000). Clearly, an emphasis on projects that require students to do something beyond filling in bubbles was refreshing. Yet, the Graduation Plus model still stifled intellectual creativity for teachers because they had to conform the projects they planned not only to CA standards but also to the GP competencies. The emphasis placed on learning content—over an emancipatory application of knowledge—encouraged by GP was influenced by a neoliberal ideology as evidenced by the Graduation Plus Competencies described in Appendix A. By externalizing the direction of the

curriculum and pedagogy to an outside entity, the Pre-CAM era was encouraging teachers only to be content experts.

Teaching as a means to competency subordinates teachers to roles as "facilitators of content" rather than allowing them to release their potential and intellectual capacity to facilitate social change, and in doing so evinces the pervasive presence of "shadow state" neoliberal ideology.

Too often teachers are expected to mold themselves as academics so that they can impress students as young professors rather than as agents of change. Rather than thinking of project-based teaching as the launching point to any kind of comprehensive solutions to the current political, economic, and social context, teachers are supposed to present content through scholarly discussions, much as young scholars would. GP clearly highlights young scholar development and has pushed forward an agenda far more developed than the overwhelmingly oppressive memorization expected of most young people in the NCLB era; however, while the latter is noteworthy, it is still detached from the kind of emancipatory work that can be done when teachers function as intellectuals for social change (Kohn, 2000).

Apolitical Rubrics for Competency

Despite the fact that Graduation Plus purported itself as an alternative project-based approach to learning, the driving force of the curriculum and instructional focus of Graduation Plus (GP) was centered on GP competencies as the lens through which to filter all content standards; however, these "lenses" served as nothing more than another set of apolitical state standards. The competencies listed in Appendix B for math as well as those listed in Appendix

C for science feature this apolitical approach whereby teachers are expected to emphasize competencies rather than an organizing vision for liberation and social change.

To feature competencies such as "problem solving" and "quantitative reasoning" in a math curriculum is certainly normal and to be expected for any school. According to Freire (1993), "banking" approaches to education have been the norm for most of the history of comprehensive schooling. Yet, privileging banking approaches above any other focus suggests an ideology of "shadow state" neoliberalism.

While it is clear that the manner in which the Graduation Plus competencies are used is certainly far removed from the manner in which state standards become the basis for standardized testing, the use of a project-based approach was for the sake of moving beyond testing. Graduation Plus, to its credit, did allow students to undertake projects that indicated their understanding of the content. However, the expectations held by the Graduation Plus model ended at the point that a student shows "competency" without having to sit for a unit or multiple-choice test. That no further critique of society or oppression took place is suggestive of a "shadow state" ideology. The chart in Appendix C shows huge oversights in bypassing the value assessing a project on the Harlem Renaissance for larger social critique and understanding. The foundational goal in Graduation Plus was for teachers to creatively use these apolitical rubrics to guide students toward earning a competent understanding of the Harlem Renaissance—and nothing more. For young people at WCS, who had been pushed out of the public school system, political, critical, and artistic connections to present-day economic inequality could easily have been incorporated into any unit on the Harlem Renaissance. Failure

to do so points to the persistence of "shadow state" neoliberal ideology at WCS in the Pre-CAM era.

Teaching in Isolation

According to Graduation Plus, planning for teachers is internalized and isolated, and thus in line with this nuanced "shadow state" neoliberal ideology. Graduation Plus completely ignored the notion of teachers working with a collaborative intention to flesh out interdisciplinary connections. Teachers were expected to begin planning within their own subject areas by using the Venn Diagram shown in Appendix D to find ways to arrive at GP competencies and CA state standards.

Curricular and pedagogical planning that takes place in this isolated vacuum greatly minimizes, if not eliminates, the use and application of content and teaching in collaboration with other subject matter. Such teaching endorses an ideological framework in which change is always brought about by "heroic individuals," rather than by democratic, collective action.

Launching into the creation of GP course design was also done in isolation. According to this course design, content was to come from the teacher alone. Certainly, assistance could be sought after the fact, but the teacher held the ultimate responsibility for the work. (See Appendix E). Teachers at WCS were not expected to do anything before creating these courses, nor were they expected to co-create culminating projects that would allow students to make connections to other subject areas or to facilitate understandings of the multiple manifestations of oppression by planning with other subject areas. The latter phenomenon evidences the kind focus on the heroic self that is often present in a "shadow state" ideological framework.

Projects for Competency

Yet another example of how Graduation Plus perpetuated a "shadow state" was the emphasis it placed on its own specified set of competencies. The expectations for a project at WCS were merely to demonstrate competency in a specific GP standard. Although a student had to indicate engagement and undertake creative writing for this project described in the GP training manual, as the prompt in Appendix F shows, the project had no political or critical element. Many students in comprehensive schools would certainly prefer to do this much richer and more meaningful set of tasks for school credit. It is certainly compelling for a young person to play the role of a writer who is documenting the Harlem Renaissance; however, the extent to which that lesson develops a young person's agency for emancipation is questionable. The mandated or expected elements in the Graduation Plus curriculum meant that teachers designed project prompts that were merely scratching the surface of a liberatory education. (See Appendix G). In this example, WCS teachers were actually asked to develop projects that made the student consider real world connections and to relate their past experiences to the project. Although this assignment moved toward the necessary elements of emancipatory education, these elements culminated by arriving at competency ultimately diminished these pivotal connections. The students were asked to account for these factors not because that work would help them identify that the Harlem Renaissance was a form of resistance to subjugation (that they should and could relate to their own resistance efforts) but to move them toward a competent understanding of the material from that time period.

CAM Manual as Gramscian Informal Education

Teachers as Intellectuals

The ideological underpinnings of a counterhegemonic ideology are in full view in the CAM introduction written by CAM Committee teachers. Because the CAM Committee ended up getting the direct and indirect input of 33 out of the 40 WCS teachers over a period of five months to create the manual, the introduction spoke to a kind of a counterhegemonic ideology that can be described as *Gramscian informal education.* (See Appendix H). The very fact that a set of teachers independently created an instructional model and facilitated professional development stood in stark contrast to the current state of the profession, which has been delegitimized, attacked, and reduced to disseminating knowledge to be used expressly for high stakes tests administered by a given state (Kohn, 2000). Furthermore, the goals of the CAM manual were intellectual endeavors in that they related to teachers functioning as agents of change, with CAM Manual templates that emphasized projects and rubrics that propose solutions in a existing local, national, or global context. The latter effort is an example of a counterhegemonic and "informal education" ideological framework. This intellectual and ideological effort at WCS was also driven by the alternative indexes (indices) developed by the WCS teachers, as explained in Appendix I. The development of these indices was an intellectual effort to organize curriculum and instruction on what Gramsci has called an "organic intellectual level" (Gramsci, 1971).

Yet, the extent to which teachers function as intellectuals in the CAM Manual era goes beyond writing a curricular and pedagogical manual or even facilitating that manual; it includes creating the necessary space and structures for teachers to observe one another

and to engage an elaborate "critical friends" process for peer feedback. (See Appendix J). Rather than deferring exclusively to a WCS principal for the review of materials, observation, and feedback, WCS teachers created an elaborate and meaningful critical friends process to intellectually value one another and to provide functional feedback to one another. This effort points to a system akin to a Gramscian "informal education."

Critical and Political Rubrics

The ideological emphasis on a counterhegemonic and informal approach to education can also be seen in the CAM Manual rubrics. The rubrics at WCS in the CAM era emanated from the foundational categories that the teachers decided to use as foundations of all curriculum and instruction: higher order thinking, postsecondary readiness, and social responsibility. Although such goals are often a part of many school ESLR's (Expected Schoolwide Learning Results), the manner in which the foundational categories informed the rubrics and instruction was more than superficial. As shown in Appendix K from the CAM Manual, the teachers developed a basis for rubrics that was more than just a discussion of the need to create social change.

These foundational elements and rubrics expect that young people "engage, and initiate socially-responsive institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice" in addition to expecting students to be able to "articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive interpersonal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice." The latter goal is the kind of expected activity that was a signature element in the CAM Manual. Teachers expected a level of content application aimed at having the student propose solutions to local and national issues in ways that went above and beyond anything in Graduation Plus.

The Social Responsibility Rubric shows the kind of critical and political elements that run throughout the CAM Manual, as evidenced in Appendix L. The SRI rubric was certainly not apolitical. The highest levels of the rubric expect students to articulate oppression, while creating and implementing a plan toward community empowerment. This rubric shows that the teachers were informed by a kind of ideological framework that seeks to educate young people in curricular and pedagogical methods that, while more informal than standardized testing, are clearly counterhegemonic.

Collaborative Expectations around Planning

In the CAM Manual era at WCS, the teachers set collaborative planning expectations before and throughout the school year. The "Site Collaboration" was unique in not just delineating planning efforts between partner teachers or in a department but across a school site. Because a Weedpatch program included nonprofit staffing beyond the WCS teachers, the idea behind the "Site Collaboration" tool was to cooperatively access the input of every stakeholder. Appendix M from the CAM Manual shows the "Site Collaboration Tool." Appendix N is an actual sample of the level of site-wide collaboration and how they entire staff came together to collaborate on what amounts to a community action project.

When this kind of extensive collaboration is taking place right in front of students, it models a very different and much more democratic approach to education than the classic "top-down" administrator-led approaches. As mentioned earlier, the teachers wrote into the CAM Manual another layer of reflection and self-monitoring that goes beyond the scope of administrative supervision. The document in Appendix O shows what is perhaps more functional collaborative feedback than the kind of feedback tied to evaluation and supervision. The

teachers who developed this model were informed by a commitment to collaborate on behalf of young change agents instead of creating a model that lowered expectations of what emancipatory teaching is about. In fact, the extent to which the teachers believed in making sure they kept track of a very progressive ideological framework was evidenced by their interest in keeping track of each other's goals. Ultimately, that kind of intrinsic detail is important to any successful endeavor or organization; when forced or contrived, collaboration will not be meaningful or move in a progressive direction.

Projects for Liberation

For a project-based school like WCS, the most important thing is to look at the rationale for projects. In the CAM era, the kinds of projects that young people at WCS produced were not compiled from a textbook or are they aimed at merely showing subject matter competency; to be sure, the recommendations of the CAM Manual were clearly informed by an "informal education" ideological framework that can influence emancipatory formative and culminating projects, such as described in Appendix P. The culminating projects did not just have the young people presenting content back to their teachers. In an attempt to facilitate the development of youth agency, the culminating tasks demanded much more than an acceptable percentage on a multiple choice test; they expected demonstrations of leadership that sought to bring about social change.

Although these latter documents only briefly detail the extent of the projects at WCS in the CAM Manual, the prompt in Appendix Q is fully fleshed out for a deeper understanding. In this document the WCS teacher-created "indices," rubrics, and projects come to life in full detail. This document clearly indicates that social responsibility, higher order thinking, and

postsecondary readiness are not superficial and meaningless. They show legitimate evidence of congruence between projects for emancipation, state standards, and WCS measures in tangible ways. The result is a solid and substantiated mission of student liberation via project-based learning and a blend of the mandates of the state and a counterhegemonic "informal education" ideological framework.

Analysis of Findings

Graduation Plus as "Shadow State" Neoliberalism

In essence, the ideological underpinnings of pedagogical and curricular decision-making at WCS were directly related to the fact that Weedpatch programs were a "shadow state" phenomenon. Although Weedpatch Charter School was independent from the Weedpatch nonprofit organizations it served, the kind of education that was initially designed to fulfill the Weedpatch mission was influenced by the needs of such a "shadow state" effort. As Smith (2001) has argued, the democratic possibilities of incorporating teacher input were dispatched and replaced by a neoliberal effort to privatize education with top-down decision-making. At WCS, just as in many charter school efforts, the goal of acquiring organizational autonomy to carry out dropout recovery was coupled with opening up education decisions to market forces (Smith, 2001).

The phenomenon of the charter school functioning under the ideology of neoliberalism was alluded to in the literature review for this study. Sources in the literature review pointed to the historical shift of charters from havens of collectivism to charters controlled by individualism and market forces (Wells, 2002). Wells has also argued that a neoliberal and globalization

paradigm drives charter school decision-making, as opposed to standing for liberation efforts in impoverished communities of color.

Although the works cited in the literature review were certainly helpful guides, the WCS context defied traditional neoliberal scholarship and required a more nuanced explanation. In essence, the literature never pointed to the kind of "shadow state" dynamic that existed in the context of WCS.

The Graduation Plus (GP) elements discovered in the findings point to an effort that goes hand in hand with a neoliberal "shadow state" ideology, which highlights market thinking and the kind of individualism necessary for the hegemonic expansion of capital. Because it encouraged the development of *Teachers as Content Experts*, Graduation Plus was still promoting the kind of "banking method" condemned by Freire (1971). The only difference was that rather than arriving at the "banking" endeavor through multiple-choice tests, learning took place through a rather limited approach to project-based learning. The use of a "banking" approach to education implies a prioritizing of universal or hegemonic knowledge (McLaren, 1988).

Freire has pointed out teachers are responsible for not furthering oppression by striving toward facilitation instead of authoritarian instruction. Freire has argued that when teachers see their roles beyond simple content delivery, they can work to politically counter the current state of oppression and work toward freedom (Freire, 1970). This effort was not occurring when Graduation Plus fostered a sense of teachers as content experts. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire has described teachers as political actors who could tap into the local social context and be

pivotal in capturing the attention of learners—an undertaking that is difficult when you expect students only to learn material.

Furthermore, that GP employed *apolitical rubrics for competency* supports the argument that the Pre-CAM era, intentionally or not, was a hegemonic endeavor. GP could prioritized a banking approach to arrive at state standards while promoting a rubric that offered greater opportunities for students to be critical of political, economic, and cultural realities. Regrettably, the GP rubrics remained apolitical. The argument could be easily made that GP rubrics were apolitical precisely to mask the hegemonic effort that really fuels a neoliberal "shadow state" agenda. According to Freire (1970), only through critical activities that politically contextualize all school activity will the oppressed and the oppressors come to understand the extent of unequal relations of power and how to rectify them. Clearly, teachers working as apolitical subject matter experts cannot begin to transform American society via the classroom.

When teachers in GP were expected to plan their lessons independently and to *Teach in Isolation,* the potential for the kind of collaboration that models emancipatory processes was passed over. However, it was not an accidental occurrence that teachers were expected to teach and plan in isolation; it is yet another example of "responsibilizing the self," which is endorsed by "shadow state" neoliberalism.

In the end, the focus on *Projects for Competency* summarize that the ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making in the Pre-CAM era were influenced by a "shadow state" neoliberal ideology. Because there was clearly a twist to the manner in which the instructional effort departed from the "high stakes" teaching to the test that occurs in traditional schools, something more alternative or progressive appeared to be in play.

However, that would have only been the reality if the direction of GP projects were tailored to the kind of emancipation work that one would expect from work in this setting.

McLaren (1998) has argued that a very different conception of the teaching profession cannot come forward if anti-teacher accountability measures are excessive, whether multiple choice or project-based learning. Goodman (2004) has pointed out that the use of anti-teacher or "teacher-proof" curriculum is part of a national effort to undermine the decision-making power and political agency of teachers, with specific respect to their ability to provide the kind of counterhegemonic "informal education" described by Gramsci.

CAM Manual Informed by Informal Education Ideology

The ideological underpinnings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS in the CAM era were informed by the kind of "informal education" ideology described by Gramsci (1971). Ultimately, the CAM approach to project-based learning was counterhegemonic not just toward the "shadow state" neoliberalism of the Pre-CAM era but also toward traditional formal education efforts.

First and foremost, the CDA findings in the CAM manual point to WCS teachers as intellectuals. In the *Teachers as Intellectuals* findings, teachers at WCS took it upon themselves to mount a counterhegemonic effort that challenged the very notion of what is expected of educational institutions. As opposed to carrying out a "banking" approach, teachers redefined the goals for which the state standards were used. This transformation meant shifting state standards to having more emancipatory ends. In addition, WCS teachers challenged the manner by which their efforts were to be measured. Rather than passively waiting for external parties to evaluate their work through an Academic Performance Index, they devised a new set of indices

(SRI, PSRI, and HOTI) that were more meaningful and more in line with the goal of teaching for emancipation. Lastly, they took it upon themselves to be evaluators of their own efforts, as evidenced by the critical friends process. These modifications exemplify developments that are informal in the eyes of state agencies or neighboring school districts, yet carry significantly more intellectual weight than the current "teaching to the test" mandates that de-intellectualize teachers (Kohn, 2000).

The decision to make use of *Critical/Political Rubrics* was yet another example of the CAM era's move toward an "informal education" ideology that countered "shadow state" neoliberalism. The teachers compiled rubrics that went beyond anything that even resembled a typical school rubric. Particular attention should be paid to how SRI rubrics ask young people to reflect upon the ways that academic content can be used to bring about social change. However, the CAM rubrics did not stop at asking for summary or for demonstrations of competency; they asked students to think about creating community action projects on which they will be assessed.

In requiring *collaborative expectations around planning* and carrying out the community action projects, teachers at WCS moved beyond Peters's (2001) the notion of "responsibilizing the self." The work of being critical friends is a level of collaboration that requires teachers to be reflective about their practice—not in "isolation" but in a process of community reflection, the latter of which models for young people what needs to take place to carry out any social change effort. However, that the CAM era required a site collaboration tool and a teacher collaboration tool truly demonstrates a kind of collaboration that can only be fostered through an "informal education" and counterhegemonic ideology.

At the time of this study, the CAM era had teachers working on *Projects for Liberation.* While it was still an internal goal to ensure that all teachers knew and felt comfortable with weaving academic standards into such a goal, reception to the new approach was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers remarked of the first professional development training facilitated by the CAM Committee that it was nice seeing that what they had learned in their teacher education programs was not being replaced by district mandates that discarded progressive approaches to curriculum and instruction. By carrying out projects with layers of involved collaboration and social change foci, the teachers were functioning according to an ideology of "informal education" that was not only counterhegemonic but also closer to the Giroux ideal of teachers as intellectuals (Giroux, 1988).

Conclusion

In the end, the research cited in the literature review clearly pointed out that to become purposeful political agents of change who wish to work in collaborative processes, teachers must also be willing to carry out intellectual transformations by virtue of their participation in curricular and pedagogical decision-making (Smylie, 1992). Smylie (1992) has also argued that political change in and of itself (by virtue of the expansion of teacher leadership opportunities) must not leave behind a cultural or intellectual element in which teacher contributions in schools are merely contributions from positions of political power (Smylie, 1992).

In actual fact, this CDA documented that teachers at WCS did not just arrive at greater access to decision-making by attaining administrative roles that boosted their power. In contrast, the WCS teachers carried out a dialectical effort that provided a counterhegemonic response to the neoliberal hegemonic ideology of the Pre-CAM era. In *Teachers as Intellectuals*, Giroux

(1988) has made the bold statement that teachers should think of themselves as transformative intellectuals and that the transformative intellectual is an agent of change who seeks to include schools as intellectually and ideologically contested spaces. For Giroux, the transformative intellectual carries out academic work that can also lead to political change. In closing, the WCS teacher work took the "dialectical" transformation in education to yet another level.

CHAPTER V

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Introduction

To be sure, a direct relationship exists between the findings of the critical discourse analysis and the findings of this narrative inquiry. Just as the previous chapter pointed to the fact that a Gramscian informal ideology developed as a counter to the preceding neoliberal "shadow state" ideology at WCS, teacher understandings of the curricular and decision-making processes at WCS also developed in a similar dialectical flow. Although the following narrative inquiry points to seemingly contrarian developments, support from WCS leadership was consistent throughout this transition from the Pre-CAM to the CAM era. Although it may be odd for school leadership to initiate a democratization effort in this era of high stakes accountability, the success of the teacher effort was only possible because it was a development that was welcomed.

To fully situate the narrative inquiry that follows, an explicit discussion of the context of what occurred at WCS before this study is first necessary. The comments made by teachers that form the basis of the two findings in this narrative inquiry (disillusionment and agency) must be explained historically in order for the teacher perceptions to appropriately situated.

The Graduation Plus Era (Pre-CAM Era)

In its first three years of operation, WCS employed a slightly modified version of the Graduation Plus curriculum and instruction model. As the director of curriculum and instruction during that time, I was responsible for a unilateral approach to the curricular and pedagogical decision-making. Although I infused more layers for social justice education into Graduation Plus, decisions were completely centralized.

Graduation Plus was a project-based educational provider that provided its clients both a training manual and follow-up coaching for project-based learning according to the Graduation Plus training manual. According to this model, a student completed projects for credits because all WCS classes were organized around Authentic Learning Tasks (ALTs). These ALTs showcased applied skills and knowledge to solve teacher/student-identified problems. Although Graduation Plus was a good alternative to the pervasive test prep "learning" in the NCLB era of high stakes accountability, the education model was still packaged with foci developed exclusively by the Graduation Plus staff. A large portion of the training manual was dedicated to explaining how to use their templates and master the Graduation Plus competencies; all information was prepackaged.

The CAM Era

In February of 2011, after three years of using the approach mentioned above, WCS decided to move away from this packaged approach to a more progressive approach to project-based learning that was fully developed by WCS teachers. Enough teachers had identified elements of the old model that seemed counter to the progressive mission and vision of WCS; these elements were: (a) The goals of the project-based learning were prepackaged; and (b) Graduation Plus was an external provider, which meant that teacher voices were not included in curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS.

When it became clear that Graduation Plus was no longer willing to support WCS's departure from Graduation Plus expectations, a group of teachers came forward to lead the development of a revamped version that would collectively access all WCS staff input. In the end, changes to the curriculum allowed a more culturally responsive approach to instruction that,

itself, would be carried out by a democratization of teacher input to those pedagogical decision-making processes. After the WCS Curriculum and Instruction Committee was formed by a self-selected group, the work to develop a teacher-owned manual and training process officially began in March 2011, and concluded with the implementation of the CAM manual in time for fall 2011.

To be very clear, I will refer to teacher understandings as Pre-CAM or CAM, an important distinction because the findings show that teachers expressed a particular understanding of curricular and pedagogical decision-making in the Pre-CAM era that sharply contrasted to their understandings in the CAM era. Notably, as the primary decision-maker regarding curriculum and instruction before the CAM era, I always had the goal of opening up decision-making to be inclusive of teachers. Yet, as the last chapter confirmed, the structures in place at WCS made it quite difficult to initiate progressive and democratic decision-making through a top-down approach. This narrative inquiry shows the teacher frustration and disillusionment with having unilateral decision-making, but concludes with how WCS teachers were able to overcome that situation with a very unique sense of agency. Their responses made room for a CAM era of teacher ownership over curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

A Teacher Agency Framework

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to demonstrate how teachers understood decision-making at an urban charter school. The specific study findings point to new directions about how curricular and pedagogical decision-making can be more inclusive of teachers. Although the literature review of this study initially pointed to a rather essentialist and somewhat limiting conception of teacher agency, the research data in this study brought forth a much more

nuanced notion of teacher agency—one in which teachers describe and carry out their contingent agency in a charter setting. This development is paradoxical given that the charter movement has not been an inherently progressive movement (Wells, 2002). Notably, at this point, this study serves to expand this academic and intellectual notion of teacher agency by highlighting the manner in which WCS teachers carried out their work in an ideologically contradictory charter setting.

Research Question

As outlined in Chapter Three, this study attempted to answer the second of this study's three research questions: How do teachers understand these decision-making processes?

Overview of Data Analysis

Individual Teacher Interview Data Coding

To code and organize the data, I specifically sifted through the data to make sure that it directly corresponded to curriculum and pedagogy and that the indirect references could still be situated within the context of this curricular and pedagogical analysis. I organized the data into categories in order to prepare for the focus group and for the eventual conversion of categories into themes. After completing the six individual teacher interviews, I coded the data into the following categories: (a) WCS/Charter Ideology, (b) Teacher Frustration, (c) Centralized Decision-making Evidence, and (d) Teacher Agency Evidence

After I coded all of the data according to the initial categories, I sought to form a focus group with three teachers who consistently had comments related to those initial findings. Once the focus group discussion was underway, I played the role of observer and recorder of their conversations. During the focus group conversations, the teachers wrestled with the topics and

debated one another in a very organic process. For long periods of time, they formulated thoughts and responses that required very little facilitation on my part.

In the end, the data that emerged were slightly outside the realm of the original agency framework. This result forced me to consider more nuanced notions of the dynamics of teacher agency at WCS in order to fully grasp their understandings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Narrative Inquiry Findings

Two major findings resulted from this narrative inquiry: Firstly, the study found participant *disillusionment* associated with the Pre-CAM era. Secondly, the inquiry found that a WCS-specific *teacher agency* had inspired the creation of the CAM Manual. As the findings showed, this WCS teacher agency came forth with multiple contradictions because the agency itself had emerged out of a very unique charter context.

Teacher Disillusionment

The anxiety and frustration that students have long experienced in oppressive educational systems are not very different from the feelings that teachers have about being blamed for public school failure. The consistent attack on comprehensive schooling is that it is more akin to "anti-learning." Students of the modern educational system have long described a stifling process of being forced to learn by overbearing school administrators who enforce an uncreative and packaged instructional approach, with the aim of keeping the youth passive and numb. To be sure, teachers share this experience.

The varied responses of the teachers regarding their disillusionment and how they understood curricular and pedagogical decision-making were wide ranging, but they consistently

pointed to a kind of psychological frustration and disillusionment with the current state of education. Although these teachers were frustrated by the lack of trust that the general public has for the teaching profession, their WCS-specific agency came to the surface because disillusionment had nurtured their willingness to support more inclusive decision-making.

Both the individual teacher data as well as the focus group data point to the contradictions of doing progressive youth development for impoverished young people of color at this particular juncture in the history of American capitalism. I initially thought that teacher responses would fall under either a very clear-cut theme of teacher agency or the opposing co-optation of that teacher agency. The teacher interviews pointed to something more akin to psychological disillusionment fueled a more nuanced notion of teacher agency.

The Value of Teacher Disillusionment

Almost like a sort of artistic suffrage, the value derived from the disillusionment experienced by those at WCS must be fully honored and considered. Although not identical to the dialectical seeds that Hegelians would consider necessary for synthesis, the psychological and almost tormenting experiences described by teachers seem to have formed the foundation of a quest for agency (Hegel, 1874).

General Disillusionment with Education

The first set of comments from the six study participants arose out of general perspectives about what role teachers should play in pedagogical and curricular decision-making. Instantly, one can see that the data point to a clear frustration and sense of disillusionment regarding how these teachers felt about the state of the profession. Roxanne Long pointed out the following:

> The danger in not having teachers lead the accountability is that only simple data like test scores and grade levels gets measured. We should have more peer review processes in

> education where we would look at the actual student work and the prompts and lessons that teachers create. The reason why legislators don't want to see that is because that would require expertise in education that they don't have. What people don't think about is that we would actually be harder on one another.

Marco Toscano spoke to the same issue of political bodies overstepping into education thusly:

> The tests are being made by decision-makers and teachers are given the task of playing guessing games in terms of what they teach in order to better prepare students for those tests. Units and lesson plans were dictated by California Standards and standardized tests.

The reference to legislators making decisions about curriculum and instruction is a good starting point to illustrate how the teachers felt powerless about what went on in the classroom.

In addition to external legislation causing a general disillusionment with education, local school administrator level was identified as a source of such frustration. The sense that curricular and pedagogical decision-making was still made without teacher input at the local school level was something that Roxanne Long could not fathom; she explained:

> The reason administration is not able to determine if there is meaningful learning is because they are handling administrative tasks. Those tasks rarely have any connection to what goes in the classroom. If we really wanted to have better teaching, you would have teachers be coaches for one another and that's because they are also in the classroom and engaged in the work. I think it's tragic that what teachers actually learn to do in most credential programs is ignored. We all learn to plan in groups and to learn how to bring that to life with the students. The credential programs don't to need fixing; they are fine. The problem is at the school level.

Marco also spoke to this issue of administrative excess in curriculum and instruction: "At most schools, administrators make sure teachers are teaching to the test and this also puts added pressure on teachers as well. Some things don't change because this was also my experience in a traditional high school." To further illustrate the point, Roxanne, in the following Focus Group commentary, continued with yet another example of the pervasive micromanaging that stifled the teaching profession:

> While there may be some good to the directions provided by some administrators, sometimes it may not be what teachers want and they will not necessarily ask teachers. I know once I had an administrator at one school who was sometimes helpful but then when it came to our Friday professional development, she was the only one deciding what would be on the agenda because she thought it was what we needed. And I think I would say there is some sort of obsessive need to have control. These decisions being made for you because there is this control factor. I think I even remember that administrator getting mad at me one time for questioning if the topic was at the right level for all of our students. And I thought to myself, "Hold on, I have hard enough time getting my students to do their reading but to make them do what she was asking for us to do did not make sense." She had this problem because she decided that this was the best for all of us instead of asking us. If the administrator wants us to find professional development useful, they should consult with us beforehand instead of taking on that paternal role.

Excessive overstepping by school administration into curriculum and instruction was tied to the disillusionment that this teacher described as a very troubling experience at her last school. She went into great detail about the lack of teacher inclusion and how democratic decisions were not fostered at her last school.

Aside from the legislative and administrative control that stifles teaching, Roxanne also pointed to the excessive high stakes accountability measures currently in place in education. Although education has always had a testing focus, the NCLB era ushered in federally imposed high stakes and the greatest spotlight on testing since the inception of IQ tests at the height of the American Eugenics movement (Stoskopf, 2002). The teachers in this study, not unlike many in education, pointed to their frustration at having to be teachers at a regressive time in the history of U.S. education. Roxanne spoke to this issue:

> Another issue is standardized testing. It pulls us teachers away from meaningful teaching. I can't think of why any teacher would want to be democratically involved in better ways to do test prep. We are really just promoting efficiency and it is another huge factor in why people don't want to take the necessary time to look at that student work.

The obsessive and expensive quest for the right textbook also related to what some have called a misguided high stakes accountability effort (Kohn, 2000). Roxanne illustrated her frustration by pointing out that textbooks were considered more important than teachers in terms of knowledge and—worse yet—teaching ability:

> We don't need state mandated textbooks. That's wrong. What do professional politicians know about which textbooks and pacing guides we should be using. Why do even need to go through that kind of review. It just reminds me of the backward kind of review process where administrative staff are the ones reviewing the professionals. Peer observation and reviews from other groups of teachers should be more valuable for all the work we do.

Yet another source of frustration pointed out by the study participants was the lack of adequate compensation for being world-leading facilitators of the kind of curriculum and instruction that our society consistently expects. Tim East pointed to the dangers of waiting for "heroic" individuals who teach with "superman"-like qualities to save education. In the following passage, Tim illustrated that the characterization of teachers in movies ignores the very real fact that teachers are grossly underpaid and overworked:

> The reason why teachers will never commit to the expectations of our society is because there is no adequate compensation for even the current work expectations. The whole country knows and feels that teachers are overworked and exhausted but yet they point to those individual heroic teachers who make a difference by working 14 hours, devoting their entire lives, and looking at themselves for answers and support. This is the problem with all those examples of teachers in movies who are the personification of the individualism we are expected to follow. None of those ever shows a collective of teachers making a collaborative effort that does not highlight the work of one person.

Disillusionment with Charter Autonomy Promise

Although considerable research has been done on the structural differences regarding autonomy between charter and traditional schools, less research has focused on the experiences of teachers in charter schools. Because charter schools always champion the freedom and

autonomy that there due according to charter law, teachers often seek employment in charters because they assume that the words freedom and autonomy will apply to their curriculum and instruction (Crawford & Fusarelli, 2001). This phenomenon leads to a charter-specific form of disillusionment, as evidenced by the following statement from Tim East in the Focus Group conversations:

> Not sure if I would describe it as a control issue but I know one of my main concerns is that, lately, education has become more of an industry. And we all know that to become a teacher you have to go through a ton of schooling that is very important training. However, it seems that in this urban charter school movement there are a lot of people who do not have that training and I continually find that to be a problem because most of them have this idea that they already know what they are doing. You know what I mean? And I think it's why we are seeing that a lot of this whole idea that "this is mine" and "I built this" in a lot of cases (not all of them) and it really affects an otherwise good mission.

Tim proceeds by pointing out what happened to a discipline program that the teachers wanted to use to improve the curriculum and instruction at WCS. Because the autonomy was more evident for the administration than it was for teachers, the following offers an example of what occurred in the Pre-CAM era at WCS and how Tim understood decision-making:

> Ever since we started implementing Restorative Justice, I feel like it has become so obvious to see the way decisions get made without our input. Yet, they proudly proclaim that we use Restorative Justice because they know people want to hear that. With regard to discipline, we are supposed to be using Restorative Justice to allow for something so different from what the student sees at a regular school. But instead of having a more open process, we are still left out.

The teachers who arrived at the doorstep of WCS seemed more than familiar with the reality of doing progressive work in either traditional schools or urban charter schools. Teachers that came to WCS because of its alternative youth development focus were operating with a framework of what it takes to counter the hegemonic forces that derail young students of color. This teacher's comments evidence his familiarity with the progressive nature of Restorative Justice for the

classroom and discipline, as well as his frustration with the school's decision to exercise autonomy when it was convenient and comfortable. In the Pre-CAM era, autonomy only applied to the administrative level, not to the teacher level.

After expressing several ideas regarding this notion of autonomy as an exclusive right to charter school leaders, Tim reiterated these ideas in the focus group conversation:

> It's like these ideas of Founder's days that some charter schools have. My question is what is the purpose of spending the time and money on that. I don't care what you call it, but if you spend school money and time to honor the founders of a school for no instructional reason, that is wrong. However, if on that day they come to provide a workshop or valuable information that all people should hear, then it is not about fueling the ego of a founder. That guy who came to us from Weedpatch USA did not come and ask for a big celebration with taxpayer dollars, he came to give workshops to improve our efforts. When people are creating these programs and schools, it's fine to acknowledge them but not because they should be seen as having absolute power.

Disillusionment with Financial Primacy over Curriculum and Instruction

Certainly, the research has shown that teachers are reporting a variety of reasons for choosing to work in charter schools. Some of the other reasons reported, aside from the school's educational philosophy, were smaller school and class sizes and an opportunity to group with like-minded educators (Miron & Applegate, 2007). The common word is "flexibility," which many teachers mention when they talk about their schools (Bierlein, 1997). Yet, some WCS teachers pointed to disillusionment with regard to classroom size and how it is really not a goal when ADA revenues are an unremitting focus.

This incessant focus on revenues was the basis for a kind of psychological suffering that resembles the financial anxiety many teachers feel when trying to make ends meet by working in an historically underpaid profession. Yet, these financial anxieties were further magnified in a charter school movement that consistently argued for subjecting the work of teachers to market

forces instead of attributing a more sublime social value to their work (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001).

The pressure of endless discussion of finances in staff meetings instead of conversations around pedagogy and instruction can become very distracting and disheartening. The stress and discontent fueled by such financial obsessions was evident in a subsequent Focus Group statement from Roxanne:

> Because our funding at WCS is so tied to student ADA, we often end up comprising the instructional/educational integrity. Rarely does it work when a student is brought into the school because too often our Weedpatch program director has brought them in a desperate attempt to raise ADA. The students have to show intrinsic interest.

Martha continued with the following concerns over how finances were the primary discussion in the Pre-CAM era:

> If we didn't have the consistent ADA concerns, we would have a different approach where we would be deliberate about planning their success instead of being so worried about finding more students. Especially, when we look at our minors, they are less likely to have figured out that they are about to run out of options. So because we know that we have ADA issues looming, we will try to work with a student who perhaps we are not staffed, qualified, or able to serve.

As Olssen (1996) has pointed out that these entrepreneurial fixations run rampant when unchecked, and redirect educational endeavors from emancipatory education to the enrichment of a few. When school leaders allow this tendency to be realized, they are not only abiding by a neoliberal worldview in which government agencies push for state-sponsored economic freedom, competition, and individual initiatives, but also alienating the employees of those agencies (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Ultimately, these market pressures encourage the expansion of a profit motive instead of a teacher/student-centered motive. The kind of liberatory and emancipatory learning that can be

facilitated for young people in small cohesive classrooms is bypassed for greater revenue-bearing crowded classrooms. Teachers at WCS who were working with students who had been in and out of both school and juvenile facilities could do better work in smaller classrooms, as Tim poignantly pointed out:

> In a lot of ways, for schools like us, we get students because nobody else wants them so I think that's what our purpose is supposed to be. We say we are about working to solve the dropout crisis but why does the ADA obsession really dictate our decisions. If ADA didn't exist, it would be a game changer for us. For instance, if we didn't always have to worry about ADA, we wouldn't always be thinking about if we are going to have jobs. Yet, everyone knows that our students are very transient. That's one of the main reasons why the students are struggling. My point is that the main issue with ADA is that it allows for people to concentrate on a meaningless statistic instead of the quality of education for those involved. If you look at the education research about the kind of support and educational services that our young people need, I should never have more than 10 students per period. And I know that we should be getting way more funding than a traditional school because we are dealing with the people they can help. The per student amount seems so arbitrary and not to tied to what their actual needs are.

At WCS, unlike at comprehensive schools, the partner Weedpatch program and WCS had to recruit the students. No home school or mandated attendance map fed students into these sites. Invariably, this system added yet another layer to the teacher duties; they faced the pressure of keeping bodies in the classroom, and several teachers described feeling troubled by not having a stake in the decision-making about just how many students is adequate for good instruction and sound finances, as Martha stated:

> I think in essence, the people who are within this structure will still continue to benefit. And the person that benefits the most is the person gaining the biggest paycheck, which would probably be the Founder of that organization because I think if the driving force behind decisions is ADA well then students in the classroom will not benefit. The students who are consistently absent and kept at the school just for ADA will make the instruction fall short for the rest. It is very difficult to get through units and to educate consistently absent students.

Roxanne added the following to this topic: "And for us, raising our ADA ends up dominating our weekly meeting time. Obsessions over funding are endemic in charter schools and can be the most frustrating aspect that block progressive possibilities." Given their excessive autonomy and freedom, the lack of oversight can easily create the problems described by these teachers. Tim contextualized this financial prioritization over curriculum and instruction with the following remark:

> The powers that are out there are undefined and multi-centered but these powers all control charters and the teaching profession in addition to legal and medical professions for the sake of monetary gain. Since making money is not the driving point for teachers, why should they be forced to be bullied by those who only care about making money? Teachers are enormously underpaid and it is intentionally that way. Why would a capitalist oriented government make it possible to adequately pay teachers who seem more interested in being progressive than profit-oriented? The idea of teaching well is not something that a capitalist framework would perceive as noteworthy or even heroic. Capitalism is dead but it's just taking a long time to flat line. The fact that it is dead is why they are over Occupying Wall Street. Good Educators have never really been wanting to contribute to the sorting that capitalism expects of schools and perhaps there is a much anticipated change coming soon.

Tim eloquently reminds us that there really is no progressive way to blend capitalism with emancipatory education. Unfortunately, the rampant neoliberalism in the charter school world has the public convinced that a free-market approach can solve the very educational and social inequity that the free market created.

To be sure, the teachers pointed to their frustration with charter autonomy over collective teacher autonomy. Martha, as part of the focus group, keyed in on this issue by saying, "I think in our earlier conversation we alluded to this issue because there is a lot of Founder's syndrome in our (non-profit) work." Tim went along with that perception with the following:

> Yeah and we can't ignore it, even if it means pointing it out to people at the risk of being fired. It's a serious issue within our own network at WCS because I think what we emphasize is this idea of the collective and how we have to have it. We can't just assume

> that we will have one leader and the rest of the teachers will blindly follow whatever that person says. One of the teachers at our school was raising questions about whether we had fair avenues to file a complaint. It's a legitimate concern because in that kind of climate people disappear when they don't fall in line.

The founder's syndrome described here was multiplied several times over because WCS partnerships were made with the individual founders or executive directors of each of the nonprofit Weedpatch programs.

This kind of autonomy used to run a Weedpatch program with unilateral financial focus was contrary to the progressive curriculum and instruction featured at WCS, which was collaborative and multilateral. Regrettably, the signature instructional progressive focus at WCS was overshadowed by the burden of financial obsessions, which set the stage for a very different but real financial disillusionment.

Disillusionment with Curriculum/Instruction Decision-Making Processes

In the Pre-CAM era, curriculum and instruction initially rested solely in my hands, as the director of curriculum and instruction. As the person who used to unilaterally make all those decisions, I knew better than anyone that there was widespread disillusionment over the fact that, no matter how progressive I tried to be, teachers had endless ideas about bettering the instructional model at WCS to make it more in line with the progressive WCS mission. The following comment by Marco Toscano illustrated this previously untapped potential:

> Under Graduation Plus it seemed like we had to shape and mold our projects/assignments to the Graduation Plus model. As a student teacher it was fairly difficult to make my own decisions on things even as simple as lesson planning, having to teach to the standardized tests limits teachers in how they teach the many different historic/present events covered in a social studies class.
> I think that the design aspects of GP allowed for some creative freedoms but the overall rubrics/competencies and general directions were GP created (not teacher/student creations). The rubric that is at the center of CAM allows for more meaningful goals and more responsive planning. CAM is about advocating for students and fostering

> community action. In GP, I never felt or would expect that a curriculum provider would foster community change or student liberation.

Roxanne Long, in her individual responses, pointed to the kind of decision-making that exists at most schools and how it impacts the kind of curriculum and instruction that can be generated by the teachers:

> When an educational effort is administratively led, there is no humility. The way education is structured, administrative work is too political and does not naturally allow for them to collaborate or exhibit the kind of humility to make good learning possible. For administration, their careers are based on the decisions they make so they are less likely to collaborate and make a process like this. They would not get the credit they are looking for.

Despite stating that most schools operate with administrative careerism as a key element, Roxanne pointed out the following with regard to how WCS administration was very different:

> There was more teacher participation than I ever had experienced . . . but the GP competencies prescribed by Graduation Plus were not a good fit for the social justice mission of our school. The competencies were just not student friendly and teachers didn't get to choose the structure or framework.

Ultimately, the teachers pointed to the roadblocks to emancipatory education put into place by a packaged approach to curriculum unilaterally deployed by one director of curriculum and instruction. Despite attempts to fuel interdisciplinary and collaborative learning in the Pre-CAM era, those attempts resulted in very little success, as Martha Valdez pointed out:

> It was clear to all of us that the reason why so many teachers could not effectively collaborate on the interdisciplinary aspects of the projects was because the old model did not have collaborative expectations. We were trying to add something very collaborative to a model that was not expecting such things from teachers.

Tim East added an explanation for the failure of those interdisciplinary efforts:

> In the centralized era at WCS where curriculum and instruction was directed by Administration, teachers had the ability to be involved only to the degree that they wanted to. Under that kind of traditional centralization, individual teachers end up teaching in isolation and it provides no opportunity to have collective approaches. Site

> program expectations of working together were never nurtured. The complicated social dynamics of teachers being sent to work at non-profit Weedpatch programs was completely overlooked . . . Since the program is trying to combat the dropout crisis that starts in schools, they too often think that we are just another batch of the same kind of teachers that work in comprehensive schools. We cannot ever look past the reality of this persistent situation.

Conclusion

There is something to be said about the confidence with which these teachers described their disillusionment through general and specific situations. They appeared to own how they have moved on from that particular frustration and how it was a sort of fundamental, almost dialectical, step necessary to claiming some agency.

> It was good beginning for a lot of us. However, it was still very restricting. I think what I saw was that there were slow but confident voices across the WCS network of schools that found appropriate avenues to speak out about what was needed. I think that it was important for us to do that because we would probably have never been allowed to do this if we didn't make it clear that we had some different opinions.

Several participants consistently explained that this kind of disillusionment has very few outlets, given that the charter movement spawns only where there is an exemption from collective bargaining.

WCS Teacher Agency

The Dialectic of Charter Teacher Agency

A dialectic of charter teacher agency was evidenced by teacher disillusionment that eventually gave rise to a very antithetical teacher agency. This very contextual agency seems to have developed not only in response to the specific dynamics of work at WCS, but also as a response to the general disillusionment the teachers had with system. This context-specific agency is chronicled in the history of that agency as it pertained to curricular and pedagogical decision-making. Rather than deterministic and in a fixed final stage, teacher agency was

contingent, thus revealing an original thesis (disillusionment) negated by an antithesis (agency), a negation that led to a new synthesis regarding the understanding of teachers at WCS. Hegel would formulate his theories in similar dialectical fashion by making implicit contradictions explicit: Each dialectical stage in any historical process is the synthesis of the contradictions inherent in the preceding stage (Hegel, 1874). In a true dialectic, both parties learn, both parties reach new insights, and both parties attempt to mutually create a new synthesis.

General Perspectives of WCS Teachers on Agency

Teachers interviewed for this study had very straightforward and firm stances regarding the extent to which they had the right to exercise their agency or remain as passive employees deferring to others who were often less qualified in the realm of emancipatory education. Roxanne Long contributed the following about her general understanding of teacher agency with regard to pedagogical and curricular decision-making:

> Listen if we want teachers to run the budget of a school and manage the operations, they would clearly need some training on that. They could do it if we really wanted them to. But on curriculum, they are already trained so we don't need a system where those who are managing the operation are also allowed to make decisions about learning. That does not make sense.

Tracy Phelps commented along the same basis. She made the following point regarding open communication between teachers and school leaders. The quotation implies that teachers should be able to express a student-centered notion of teacher agency:

> In providing more opportunities for effective communication, I believe school leaders and teachers could better understand and collaborate around curricular successes and areas in need of improvement. Open communication would be a key component in establishing collaborative curricular decision-making and building a stronger sense of rapport and trust.

Tim pointed out the rather important distinction among the levels of agency that teachers can express. Too often, we restrict teacher agency to the local level and assume that teachers are not capable of participating in macro-level discussions in the realm of education policy. Tim emphasized that teachers can exercise their agency at both levels:

> Teachers can have ideally two levels of participation: a) Macro: Teachers should be the driving force in education policy. b) Micro: Teacher involvement in local decision-making. This allows for teachers to be influential at the big idea level but also involved at the implementation.

WCS Teacher Autonomy as Agency

The use of charter autonomy for the sake of a progressive and emancipatory agency was a notion captured by WCS teachers and documented by the participants of this study. Rather than bypassing this opportunity to make functional and responsible use of autonomy toward agency, Marco Toscano documented the manner in which the newly received autonomy was used to foster curricular and pedagogical agency:

> When the ACE process was launched, it was clear that we were being given a green light. What was cool was that it was not outlined for us. We really were going to create whatever we wanted and needed. So long as it fit within what progressive teachers would do to facilitate student liberation and how they could work as agents of change, we were going to come up with the whole thing. And that is what happened. I feel totally comfortable about the changes we made because it shows that it was not a false process. As a group of teachers, we truly did become the ones who called the shots about the adjustments being made.

The following excerpt best captures how teachers at WCS captured the little autonomy they had and used it toward a very specific goal. Their agency was progressive in nature because they not only authored a new curriculum and instruction manual, but also came up with an accountability measure alternative to the NCLB-mandated Academic Performance Index. The WCS Indices were measures that teachers did not have to create but nonetheless felt was an

important way of communicating to the public how they were going to assess the elements of Social Responsibility, Higher Order Thinking, and Post-Secondary Readiness built in to the CAM manual. Martha Valdez explained:

> Creating the CAM manual was probably the most important collaboration I have been involved with. The process was liberating because it allowed for flexibility. It was just about allowing teachers to be autonomous and seeing what came out of it. I felt like the essential question creation was really a process that belonged to us. Because we were the ones starting with the foundation and the goals for learning, then it allowed for so many others things to flow out of that. The Social Responsibility, Post-Secondary, and Higher Order Thinking rubrics really flowed out of our work in natural ways. It wasn't like we were trying to fit our own creations into someone else's rubrics. At our site, this was super helpful for allowing our students to easily provide their own input on what projects were to be put into place. They could not do that before because they saw that even us teachers were having trouble abiding by the mandated model.

Roxanne added to the notion that the teachers used the autonomy for a very specific progressive mission and countered the widely held beliefs about charters; she explained:

> We made the CAM model. And we were very methodical about what we created. We were just not adding another layer to the prescribed templates. The SRI, PSRI, and HOTI rubrics were not just an add-on. These very meaningful layers were given equal status to the state standards.

Wellness via Lessened Financial Focus

In a very sharp contrast to the psychological pressures of ADA, the CAM committee and the 33 teachers who helped make it possible showed that the teachers used a very contextual agency to create a different instructional model. Their statements evidence the psychological relief they experienced in shifting away from ADA finances and to the intrinsic and meaningful goals of instruction and curriculum. Roxanne Long spoke to this welcome instructional focus, which opposed the stifling ADA conversations at the WCS site level:

> We did 3 hours every week for 5 months from March-July 2011. I remember the first two meetings were more to setup the process than anything else. The final product we made was purely a teacher created product that we felt we needed to create.

These comments point to an effort that entirely shifted the conversation for a period of five months. It would have been next to impossible for the teachers to gather for such a long project without an intrinsic connection to the projects and the sense that their aims were more meaningful than meeting ADA targets. The CAM manual creation process was never about how many more students would come to the Weedpatch program or increasing site revenues. The only goal was providing instruction for young people that would utilize academic content to propose solutions to the pervasive problems in their community.

Tim reiterated his beliefs about the mismatch between capitalism and progressive education. In this commentary, he is referred to the collective methods featured in the CAM manual:

> Teachers can't play any roles in an educational system that serves a capitalist system. The role of good teaching towards liberation fits better with a socialist economic system. In a socialist educational system, the teachers would be expected and empowered to take active roles in collective decision-making as we did with CAM. Think about it: All you have to do is pay someone a big salary and they will do whatever they are told. However, it is not easy to manipulate collective bodies. Any worker in any industry would prefer and be honored to work in a system where they would be given the right to make their own decisions, yet people assume that such freedoms should never be assigned to teachers.

With a new sense of ownership and agency brought about in the CAM era, Martha questioned the financial focus at many charter schools:

> The initial start up of a charter is goodwill and you want to help but then it becomes greed. That greed isn't always just about money, it's also about recognition. If you can package your school correctly, you can make it look like your accomplishing a whole lot when you're not.

Martha was very clear that a school should not have endless discussions about finances with staff. Those realities, which will always be around, should not deter good decision-making around curriculum and instruction.

Agency and the Democratization of WCS Curricular Instructional Decision-Making

The timeline for the democratization of teacher decision-making at WCS began with teachers having conversations about what they felt was a more progressive approach to instruction than Graduation Plus. The democratization culminated with their conducting the professional development for fall 2011. The following was Tim's opinion:

> When WCS began to decentralize and begin the move toward opening curriculum and instruction, the outcome was a new teacher manual and instructional procedures that make it necessary for there to be collective collaboration. The work has become less mechanical and more intellectual. The CAM manual Process was the most incredibly successful collaboration I have been involved with. I am very proud of the manual that we produced because it is something to be celebrated because of the fact all staff had social buy-in, even if they were initially hesitant. Initially, I felt that it was not possible for this to occur, especially because we were trying to account for Social Responsibility that is so important to our Weedpatch mission. The lack of mandated involvement with regard to the CAM manual was special. It was never mandatory and we organically volunteered to come for the right reason. Although it took time for people to trust that this was really open for teachers to decide what we needed for ourselves, we eventually ran with it.

In identifying the key components, the teachers understood that a willingness on behalf of WCS administration was necessary. This whole effort was always supported by all stakeholders and included endorsement from Weedpatch USA, the WCS Board, and WCS Founder. Martha keyed in on the importance of this element:

> To me, this part comes down to ego and power trips. They (administration) had to be willing to relinquish power and have the right kind of communication strategies to make this real. Also, if other people want to do this, they need to have an administration that is ready to adapt to what the teachers decide to do. But this isn't just on the shoulders of teachers. They need to also show commitment and follow through.

The democratization was evidenced by the way the teachers described the power dynamics in the CAM era, as this Focus Group comment from Tim illustrated:

> Well if you take the 3 administrators at our school. The Founder and the two principals are the administration in theory. But it's really more like they work for us. Whenever we need help with a particular issue, they are always there to support us.

Evidence of the democratization was evident even at the site level. Martha recounted her happiness regarding how the site director at her location understood the importance of this change:

> We have had success at our site by taking our program director to the side after a meeting and letting him know that he didn't really listen. I know most people wouldn't do that but we feel it has been necessary and that he is open to it. He knew we were finally able to create and include the things that we felt were necessary. The part that was most important for me was to have a school that, on purpose, wants teachers to have rubrics for social responsibility. Most schools do this as an afterthought and we built it in from the start.

Felicia Mendez substantiated that teachers welcomed this new era, in which their input regarding curriculum and instruction had been dramatically democratized:

> Moreover, curriculum planning at YCSC is now voice of combination of genius thoughts of different educators who have different ideas on how to improve, assess, help and implement the project-based system of our school.

In the end, teachers in this study pointed out that this change was only a beginning with regard to teacher agency. As Roxanne Long mentioned, the extension of decision-making to budgeting and to the general operations of a school would also be ideal. However, she was humble in knowing that such change would require a training process:

> I feel that it would also be good to have the decision-making spread over to discipline/budgeting/operations. In order for this to get that level at our school, we should make sure that those other committees are open to free elections to avoid the possibility of resentment. Ideally, you could have one person perhaps from each site and for other schools perhaps one from each grade level.

Conclusion

These last comments about future democratization efforts that include school finance decisions and not just curricular and pedagogical decision-making seem like the best way to end this discussion. This topic is important in and of itself, but is beyond the scope of this study. The narrative inquiry was merely an attempt to capture teacher understanding of pedagogical and curricular decision-making.

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

As the findings emerged, I realized that I could not designate the charter teacher responses in this narrative inquiry as examples of the reproduction theory offered up by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in *Schooling in Capitalist Americ*a or as a clear illustration of neoliberalism's influence over the charter school movement as highlighted in Michael Apple's *Ideology and Curriculum* (1990). Although these thinkers have explained some basic realities, they have not explained the convergent dynamics at play in this study. Their established ways of describing educational phenomenon cannot account for the increasingly blurry boundaries of the charter school context (Holme, Lopez, Scott, & Wells, 1999).

To be specific, the narrative inquiry data unveil more nuanced findings, which rest upon the contradiction of a batch of progressive teachers working in the historically anti-teacher space of charter schools. Their understandings of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS can only be explained after accounting for the fact that they were attracted to the work at WCS because they felt that, although it was a charter, there was room to operate as social change

educators. The following analysis documents how their disillusionment and quest for agency can be seen as emanating from this very specific context.

The contingent and contextual nature of their disillusionment and agency is vital because it avoids reducing the WCS teacher counter-narratives to essentialist descriptions. In other words, essentializing and reducing their counter-narratives to universal generalizations eliminates the value that issues from their comments and ignores the multiplicity of other teacher perspectives. Not only was it important to avoid the essentialism that could undermine and co-opt the teacher counter-narratives, but also it was important to avoid a paternalistic romanticizing of their efforts.

If my documentation of the teacher efforts to have ownership over curricular and pedagogical decision-making sounded as if it were something that could be continuously replicated, then it could easily be exploited for capitalist reproduction; that there was a necessary struggle for teacher agency to come to fruition must not be overlooked.

Disillusionment as a Necessary Dialectical Seed

If the focus of this study was to document how WCS teachers understood curricular and pedagogical decision-making that WCS teachers arrived at their notion of agency was only made possible by the disillusionment they had experienced. Such disillusionment can be interpreted as the necessary seed for progress. According to the literature on how teachers react to the oppressive forces that cause such disillusionment and alienation, the theoretical frameworks seem either restrictive or extreme. Rather than assuming an obvious oppositional binary, dialectics served to better explicate the negation of teacher disillusionment by a WCS-specific teacher agency.

According to Hegel (1874), "The contradiction is the source of all movement and life; only in so far as it contains a contradiction can anything have movement, power, and effect." In short, dialectics can be defined as a concept that features the necessity of struggle. As evidenced by the WCS teachers, the struggle can be psychological and internal and still able to abide by diplomacy. To move forward with any development, internal contradictions are necessary building blocks. The notion that charter teacher disillusionment could be seemingly opposed and contradicted by the antithesis of charter teacher agency can be, at a superficial level, regarded as a paradox; however, paradoxes are perpetually present in the nuanced realm of education. Only fuzzy and paradoxical contradictions make up our social and educational contexts. In essence, opposites must come together in necessary struggles. Hegel (1874) has described this necessary paradox as a "unity of opposites"—the incessant continuity of struggle is what makes change possible.

If one were to apply the previously outlined Hegelian logic to an analysis of the narrative inquiry findings, then we would try to compare the sequence of these findings to Marx's dialectical materialism. Marx used Hegel's dialectical method to philosophically explain the stages of history. According to Marx, human history is nothing more than a history of necessary struggle that will move in the following sequence: primitive communism to feudalism to capitalism to communism (Marx, 1867). Each successive stage of history is the synthesis arrived at through the negation of a preceding and dialectical clash between thesis and antithesis.

To situate the dialectic of charter teacher agency evidenced in the findings, we may begin by labeling the teacher disillusionment as the thesis. The antithesis that negates this disillusionment was evident in the rise of the teacher agency at WCS. However, rather than

looking at this antithesis of teacher agency as a destructive negation, the diplomatic nature of the rise of WCS teacher agency requires a more sophisticated understanding of such a negation. The negating antithesis of teacher agency at WCS should ultimately be regarded as a positive that was embraced and encouraged by the WCS founder, Jim Rawley Collins and the WCS Board. A complete understanding of dialectical development is only possible when a holistic understanding of the necessary clash between a thesis and antithesis exists. Hegel has clarified that "contradiction is the root of all movement . . . and that something is living insofar as it contains contradiction, which provides it with self-movement" (Hegel, 1874). The rather seamless, facilitated, and well-received movement between disillusionment to agency at WCS is proof of the "living" nature of the development at WCS.

The Expectations that Came with the WCS Mission

The basis of the dialectic of WCS charter teacher agency begins with disillusionment. There is perhaps no better beginning point than their expectations with the WCS Mission:

> The mission of the Weedpatch Charter School is to cultivate collaborative learning communities in which every student has the right to an authentic education, plays a meaningful role in creating positive social change, and becomes an active participant in working towards just conditions for all.

The greatest sense of disillusionment in the Pre-CAM era came from the assumption that a school like WCS (with a stated mission of collaborative learning for students) would have built-in collaborative curricular and pedagogical decision-making. The WCS focus of youth/community development and dropout recovery was assumed to be emancipatory and liberatory. Yet, to avoid reproducing the very inequality it sought to combat, WCS would necessarily model decision-making for young people so they would learn how to collectively arrive at political, economic, and social equality. The progressive mission that was featured on

all WCS brochures, materials, and the website attracted the very progressive and teacher-activist staff that work at WCS. An overwhelmingly large percentage of WCS teachers had either studied at historically progressive schools of education and/or had extensive backgrounds in community activism. As the disillusionment findings clearly show, the WCS teachers who were included in this narrative inquiry commented on how they expected more progressive decision-making from a school with this kind of mission. The narrative inquiry data overwhelmingly show that they did not expect not to have all curricular and pedagogical decision-making centralized in the hands of a single person working as the director of curriculum and instruction.

The Contextual/Contingent Agency at WCS

As the teachers chronicled the dialectical negation of disillusionment with the rise of a WCS-specific teacher agency, they saw this as highly contingent in the WCS context. In preparing to conduct this narrative inquiry, I found that the literature highlighting teacher agency led to a more critical understanding of how decision-making processes at charter schools can go from closed to inclusive (Block, 1995; Morris, Doll, & Pinar, 1999). However, a traditional understanding of teacher agency only scratched the surface by noting that, in general terms, teachers have the capacity to carry out social change along with the young people they teach.

The literature did not fully account for the paradoxical context at WCS. At WCS, the school leadership actually supported the organic democratization effort and welcomed the development of curricular and pedagogical decision-making that was less centralized and in line with the WCS mission. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have reminded us that conceptions of teacher agency should not be essentialized as an entity that can heroically defeat oppressive structures. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have expressed that they favor the idea of

agency characterized by multiplicity because of the various and constant teacher interactions with oppressive structures.

The teachers consistently spoke of the specific historical context of WCS that made it possible for the democratization of decision-making to take place. Graduation Plus was the educational approach in place before the teacher-led effort, but that partnership began to dissolve halfway through the third year of the school. Therefore, an important factor in having the teachers assume decision-making authority over curriculum and instruction at WCS was ending the partnership with Graduation Plus. If WCS had kept its partnership with Graduation Plus, the stage would not have been set for the development of the CAM Manual and increased teacher inclusion. Although it is necessary to point out the very progressive nature of the WCS staff and their expectations for collaborative decision-making at WCS, accessing their agency was contingent upon the historical context of the change in curricular partners at WCS.

The Lack of WCS Administrative Resistance

As evidence of the nuanced nature of the dialectical developments at WCS, no resistance to more open and collaborative processes occurred in the democratization of the curricular and pedagogical decision-making. In fact, as evidence of the rather contradictory context of a school with significantly centralized decision-making processes, the founder and CEO of WCS provided endless support for the development of the CAM Manual, and admitted that WCS pedagogical and curricular decision-making would be greatly enhanced with teacher input. Ultimately, the preconceived expectations of how such decisions should be made at a school with a progressive mission and lack of WCS administrative resistance allowed a rather seamless move toward the democratization of curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Wellness over Financial Anxiety

Given that the teachers were able to arrive at the agency necessary to creating the CAM manual, they evidently had achieved a level of wellness necessary to carrying out such a task. Ultimately, the whole process was a diplomatic effort to overcome incessant discussions over school finances and to bring emancipatory discussions about curriculum and instruction back to center stage. When teachers have low decision-making power and inadequate support from their superiors and peers, their anxiety levels mount (Winzelberg & Luskin, 1999). Levels of anxiety are already high in education, but the WCS teachers were able to reduce this anxiety by increasing their agency and decision-making power. The WCS teachers who recognized the value of increased focus on curriculum and less of an obsession with finances came to realize that teacher disillusionment did not have to be a permanent experience. These teachers are now at less risk of developing the teacher burnout usually brought on by multifaceted emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997). The successful prevention of teacher burnout at WCS marked a successful departure from the destructive impact of disillusionment on the wellness of students and teachers alike (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The Limitations of Teacher Agency beyond WCS

Any dialectical negation of a thesis cannot possibly be a complete and total negation. Despite the endless efforts of WCS to open up the decision-making around curriculum and instruction, the democratization effort was limited to WCS and did not extend to the partner Weedpatch program. The decision-making structures at the Weedpatch program were not the domain of WCS. WCS was an independent charter school with its own leadership and board that

was separate from the leadership and boards of the Weedpatch Programs. The school came to be because Weedpatch USA gave seed money to launch a school that would support the Weedpatch affiliates across California.

These distinctions are necessary because some teacher comments about the need for more inclusion were more about their concern with the top-down decision-making at their respective Weedpatch program rather than at Weedpatch Charter School. Although a distinction exists in formal terms, the decisions made about curriculum and instruction have indirect connections to funding decisions. Thus in spite if a separation between WCS and Weedpatch leadership, the congruence means that eventually all decisions will affect all aspects of the school. However, this study was primarily about how teachers understood curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS; the congruence that such decision-making had to other aspects of the WCS partnerships were not a part of this study.

The Contradictions of Teacher Agency at WCS

Although by the end of this study, WCS had a highly developed teacher agency at and had created a manual and facilitated professional development, the teachers were only able to arrive at this point through a dialectical process that featured various contradictions. Usually a push for greater access to decision-making at the school level involves many people. Boards of Education, legal counsel, superintendents, local superintendents, and several others layers of bureaucratic control have their own stake in deliberations around whether to include teachers in decision-making. Yet, at WCS the teachers assumed their new powers over curriculum and instruction by virtue of the decision made by Jim Rawley Collins, founder and CEO of WCS. Many anticharter groups claim that charter school leadership structures mirror corporate

structures in order to carry misguided agendas. Top-down leadership structures that have been ushered in by charter school legislation and have removed the layers of bureaucracy can be easily abused to create authoritarian and self-interested decisions. At WCS, however, Jim Rawley Collins used this historically nondemocratic vehicle to arrive at democratized teacher input. Given the anti-teacher stances of so many charter school founders, this development is not common.

Although the teachers understood that they had gained more access to curricular and pedagogical decision-making, their access to this increased agency had, in fact, been granted via a unilateral decision made by the WCS founder. Still, only highlighting the irony and contradiction of democratic access brought about by an antidemocratic vehicle is simplistic, given that such a transformation could not happen in most traditional public school settings. In essence, this contradiction proved to be extremely valuable.

From Neoliberal Co-Optation to the Mutual Co-Optation at WCS

The dialectic of charter teacher agency evident in the findings of this narrative inquiry highlights that the teachers were not alone in their efforts. A mutual effort with the WCS leadership took place to reclaim the original teacher-centered idea of charter schools. As president of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Shanker supported charter schools giving teachers more autonomy and co-creating new instructional approaches (Shanker, 1988). Shanker (1988) has viewed charter schools as an instructional model in which teachers can finally achieve autonomy. However, as Smith (2001) has argued, the democratic possibilities of charter schools incorporating teacher input were replaced by a neoliberal effort to privatize with market-driven, top-down decision-making (Apple, 2006).

With the latter context in mind, the work at WCS to use the charter vehicle for the progressive mission of serving dropout students and the reclamation of teacher agency is the kind of nuance that goes beyond current research. If the anticharter critics (Apple, 2006; Smith, 2001; Wells, 2002) feel that neoliberal forces co-opted the charter movement, then it is fair to say that the democratization of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS is a reversal of that co-optation. In the end, WCS teachers reversed the neoliberal co-optation of charter schools—a co-optation whose signature feature is an exemption from collective bargaining. Jim Rawley Collins has spoken to how this reversal of that co-optation took place:

> We did not begin the school with a team of teachers in place; therefore, we did not benefit from their participation in the planning phase. However, in order to ensure that teachers were able to participate in the development of the actual courses that were taught at YCSC, from the beginning we worked with a model for curriculum development that gave teachers the power and the responsibility to create courses and make key decisions with regard to content and the particulars of course materials and themes. Each new year, with new teachers coming on board and a developing understanding of effective strategies, the methodology that YCSC used to develop coursework also evolved to reflect teacher ideas. Each new teacher brought perspectives to the process. Additionally, the student body is an organic and changing unit that we wanted to respond to in and evolutionary way. By the third year, we decided to formalize the process of curriculum improvement and called a team of teachers together to work together in an organized way to fully evaluate our methodology for curriculum development and suggest improvements. The result of that process is that teachers are now fully vested with making the decisions that are required at YCSC for curriculum and pedagogy.

Thus, there a mutually agreed upon reversal of the neoliberal co-optation was carried out by WCS leadership and the teachers. Given that, as of this study, every teacher who participated in this movement was both still employed and highly regarded by WCS indicates that this transformation was not a clash of binaries but a diplomatic collaboration. This mutual coming together of historically opposed groups in education should be regarded as a complex but

positive development that could serve as a model for multiple manifestations elsewhere depending on the given context.

The narrative inquiry, herein, is thus summarized by a collective collaboration that was contingent upon the very unique WCS context. The "re-contextualization" carried out by both WCS teachers and leadership defies formulation through simple reproduction theories that only serve to provide excessive generalizations (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Such ways of knowing, while useful to get the discussion going, cannot do justice to the paradoxical nature of developments at WCS between two groups devoted to improving the emancipatory instruction at WCS (Holme et al., 1999).

Conclusion: The Dialectic of Charter Teacher Agency

In summary, the synthesis that arose out of the clash between disillusionment and teacher agency came from a very organic and necessary struggle. The sequence of developments related to teacher understanding of curricular and pedagogical decision-making at WCS was evidence of a complex set of contradictions and nuanced interactions in which each positive development was achieved only after the negation of the previous and functional development. These negations were remedied at the next stage of development. In other words, that this narrative inquiry highlighted dialectical shifts in how teachers understood curriculum and pedagogy at those prior stages of understandings is not lost. One's era negation did not represent its total elimination.

In conclusion, both the disillusionment and the teacher agency coalesced to form a new synthesis, which is described in the conclusion of this study. The latter synthesis was the offspring of the negation of disillusionment and agency that will be used to answer the third

research question, which itself can be used to inform more inclusive curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes.

CONCLUSION

CONTINGENT COLLECTIVISM

Introduction

Because both Chapters Four and Five pointed to a dialectically evolving process that allowed WCS teachers to bring about a particular type of counterhegemonic teacher agency, the answer I would like to give to the third research question would be that this "dialectic of teacher agency" can be used to inform curricular and pedagogical decision-making at other charter schools. Although other charters will have very unique contexts (just like the unique particulars that gave rise to the WCS specific teacher agency), contextual teacher democratization, or what I would like to call *contingent collectivism,* can be the culminating phase of the respective school's dialectical phases. Rather than proposing a new fixed or prescriptive theory, dissertation points to the need for commitment to democratic and collectivist principles that will surface in their own particular way and that are contingent upon the given context.

Revisiting the Purpose of the Study

Because the purpose of this study was to allow the stories of these few teachers to unveil the potential for the further democratization of teacher input at urban charter schools, I feel that the counterhegemonic efforts made by WCS are functional examples—even if they cannot serve as sweeping generalizations. In actual fact, the whole idea was to avoid the kind of essentialist notions that disregard the variety and multiplicity of counterhegemonic potential. Ultimately, the following detailed summary and conclusion of this study will add to the currently limited research on the level of influence that charter schoolteachers can have on curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Research Question

The third and final research question is the following: How can these teacher understandings inform more inclusive curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes?

Summary of Findings: The Dialectic of WCS Teacher Agency

The critical discourse analysis (CDA) and narrative inquiry made clear that the teacher understandings of pedagogical and curricular decision-making at WCS can best be configured as a dialectal transformation. The manner in which the Pre-CAM "Shadow State" Neoliberalism was countered by a form Gramscian "informal education" ideology is best explained by the thinking of the former as a thesis and the latter as its contrarian antithesis. In similar fashion, the manner in which the narrative inquiry findings point to the thesis of teacher *disillusionment* being countered by an antithetical *teacher agency* can be likened to a dialectical development.

Ultimately, the dynamic at Pre-CAM WCS was a phenomenon related to particular neoliberal developments that cannot be entirely explained by broad generalizations. As Michael Peters's (2001) theorizing on "shadow state" neoliberalism has clarified, that WCS was a charter school designed to deliver education in the antipoverty Weedpatch programs, their efforts effectively assumed the tasks that have historically been the domain of the state. Although the government is clearly not effectively addressing inequality, having private nonprofits take center stage actually means that market-style competition comes more into play in the bidding for such work.

The latter neoliberal beginnings of WCS's work meant that its instructional endeavors necessarily supported a similar neoliberal agenda. As the CDA unveiled, when teachers were encouraged to be content experts, employ apolitical rubrics, teach in isolation, and create projects

for competency, the neoliberal agenda went unchecked. The kind of dialogical education for liberation that Freire (1971) endorsed was not in place even though WCS was using a seemingly alternative approach with its project-based model. By virtue of its support of a "shadow state" endeavor, a hegemonic coalition of politics, economics, and culture was in full operation at WCS—whether or not it was intended.

When they began to dialectically dismantle the hegemonic nature of Pre-CAM WCS ideology, WCS teachers did so by incorporating a kind of Gramscian informal education ideology that supported a WCS-specific teacher agency. This agency was highlighted by teachers teaching as intellectuals, with politicized rubrics, in collaborative processes that culminated with the creation of projects designed to facilitate student emancipation and liberation.

The latter kind of "informal education" has been at the ideological core of curricular and pedagogical decision-making in the CAM era. This model developed only because of unanimous consensus from schoolteachers and WCS leadership that the neoliberal direction of instruction at WCS was not beneficial for students or in line with a progressive effort. In providing something counter to the "shadow state" ideology, the teachers carried out something so alternative and so much more emancipatory that it resembled an informal education unlike any state mandated and bureaucratically endorsed education.

As the narrative inquiry findings demonstrate, the charter teacher disillusionment could not be described as perfect examples of the reproduction theory offered by Bowles and Gintis in *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) or as a clear example of neoliberalism's influence over the charter school movement, as highlighted in Michael Apple's *Ideology and Curriculum*

(1990). Due to the dialectically unfolding nature of changes at WCS, the established ways of describing educational phenomena could not account for the increasingly nuanced WCS context (Holme et al., 1999).

Contingent Collectivism as the "Final Stage" of the Dialectic of Teacher Agency

Therefore, I would like to propose the term *contingent collectivism* to answer the third research question regarding how these teacher understandings can be used to inform further democratization. To be sure, *contingent collectivism* refers to a theoretical assumption that there should be no prescriptive recommendations about how collective democratization will dialectically unfold. The notion of "contingent" teacher collectivism is inspired by the writings of Richard Rorty in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. In Rorty's utopia, people would never attempt to settle for restrictive and prescriptive generalities such as "good," "moral," or "human nature"; instead, they would be allowed to arrive at their own decisions on their own subjective terms (Rorty, 1989). Contingent collectivism can better describe the example at WCS, where a highly contextual sense of disillusionment and agency led to a counterhegemonic effort. In other words, essentializing and reducing teacher counter-narratives to universal generalizations eliminates the value that comes forth from their comments in addition to the ignoring the multiplicity of other teacher perspectives. Not only was it important to avoid the essentialism that could undermine and co-opt the teacher counter-narratives, but also it was important to avoid paternalistically romanticizing of their efforts.

If the focus of this conclusion is to document how the WCS teacher experience can inform further democratization efforts, a major concluding point is that WCS teachers only arrived at their notion of agency through the disillusionment they experienced. Such

disillusionment can be interpreted as the necessary seed for progress. In the literature on how teachers react to the oppressive forces that cause such disillusionment and alienation, the theoretical frameworks seem either restrictive or extreme (Apple, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Rather than assuming an obvious oppositional binary, dialectics served to better understand the negation of teacher disillusionment with an antithetical and WCS-specific teacher agency.

Hegel (1874) has defined dialectics as a concept that features a necessary of struggle. As evidenced by the WCS teachers, the dialectical struggle can be psychological and internal, but remain professional and diplomatic. In the end, opposites must come together in necessary struggles. Hegel (1874) has described this necessary paradox as a "unity of opposites." The incessant continuity of struggle can make perpetual education reform possible.

Marx used Hegel's dialectical method to philosophically explain the stages of history. According to Marx, human history is nothing more than a history of necessary struggles that will move global history in the following sequence: from primitive communism to feudalism to capitalism and, finally, to communism (Marx, 1867). Each successive stage of history, for Marx, is the synthesis arrived at by the negation of a thesis with antithesis. Marx's stages of history are a good analogy for the manner in which both WCS and education, in general, have gone through their own dialectical development.

Charters Will not be the "Last Schools"

Based on the lessons learned from WCS and on borrowing from the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic, *contingent collectivism* may be used to explain future developments, but can only occur after traditional and charter schools dialectically negate each other. Therefore, we should almost welcome charters with their neoliberal and capitalist frameworks not because they

are the final apex— “last schools”—in the dialectical unfolding of U.S. education but because they have successfully challenged—if not forever problematized—“feudalistic” traditional public schooling. The latter analogy is helpful to describe the anti-intellectual decision-making at traditional schools, in which teachers unquestionably take orders from their respective “lords and kings.” To complete the “stages of history” analogy made in Chapter Four, the stages of education can be referred to as moving traditional schools to charter schools then to schools featuring some form of contingent collectivism. In that sense, charters function as a necessary dialectical stage, just capitalism was a necessary stage for Marx’s dialectical materialism (Marx, 1867).

Although it has brought a new kind of hegemony that requires a more sophisticated counterhegemonic response (as in the case of WCS teachers), the charter movement is an opening that should be welcomed, because teachers can organize with better outcomes when they can dialectically deploy their agency against a less rigid charter school environment than that of the unshakable and “feudal” district model.

In his groundbreaking work, *The End of History and The Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama theorized that because The Cold War clash between capitalism and communism ended with capitalism standing, no further expectation could be made that the next stage of history would be worldwide communism. For Fukuyama (1992), history as described by Hegel and Marx had come to an end, and capitalism was to be the last stage. Ideological posturing and reformulation was no longer necessary, except for the minor adjustments necessary for Fukuyama’s "Last Man" to freely pursue profit as he has explained in the following:

> Both Hegel and Marx believed that the evolution of human societies was not open-ended, but would end when mankind had achieved a form of society that satisfied its deepest and

> most fundamental longings. Both thinkers thus posited an "end of history": for Hegel this was the liberal state, while for Marx it was a communist society. This did not mean that the natural cycle of birth, life, and death would end, that important events would no longer happen, or that newspapers reporting them would cease to be published. It meant, rather, that there would be no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all of the really big questions had been settled. (Fukuyama, 1992, p.2)

Just as there is danger in abiding by Fukuyama's (1992) controversial thesis that the "Last Man" is capitalist man, there is danger in believing that the charter school movement is the "Last School"—if the notion of contingent collectivism is to given merit. Ultimately, when teachers begin to organize against those charter school forces, the next dialectical education phase will come and replace charter schools. The charter movement is associated with enough anti-teacher and anti-collective bargaining philosophies that it cannot possibly be the "Last School." Thus, just as Fukuyama's "Last Man" thesis was critiqued for its excessive hubris, that charters are going to be the "Last School" should also be questioned.

Rather than opposing the forthcoming and already-brewing teacher revolts against "at-will" employment in the charter movement, charter school developers can be as proactive as WCS and foster a teacher democratization effort rather than finding themselves victims to it.

In the end, the charter movement can deal with the looming and nasty resistance efforts stirring in a charter teaching community that has fallen victim to union busting, the de-intellectualization of teaching, and other neoliberal endeavors, *or* they can foster new directions that go beyond binaries of "good" and "evil" whereby unions are always seen as good and "at will" arrangements are seen as evil.

To clarify the nuanced aspects of this kind of work, I would like to make an historical comparison to how Lenin believed that Russia needed to go through its "capitalist" phase to

arrive at socialism when he argued for the New Economic Policy (Sheldon, 1981). In essence, charter schools are the necessary "capitalist" dialectical phase to take us from "feudal" school districts to the day when teachers collectively run their own schools. Welcoming this dialectical process at WCS and at other charters is akin to welcoming a necessary struggle that must happen to complete the dialectic whereby teachers finally experience and participate in democratic freedom. Therefore, current and new charter school developers should not proclaim that charter schools are the "Last Schools" and ignore the potential for future unfolding dialectical developments. On the contrary, they should foster the progressive change that will eventually manifest as a negation to the charter movement.

Perpetual Contingent Teacher Collectivism

A commitment to perpetually transforming *contingent collectivism* is the only recommendation from this study. These new directions cannot be prescriptive nor can they be packaged if they are to truly go beyond the current fundamentals that created the divisions in the first place. Foucault (2006) has helped us understand this reality:

> And contrary to what you think, you can't prevent me from believing that these notions of human nature, of justice, of the realization of the essence of human beings, are all notions and concepts which have been formed within our civilization, within our type of knowledge and our form of philosophy, and that as a result form part of our class system; and one can't, however regrettable it may be, put forward these notions to describe or justify a fight which should--and shall in principle--overthrow the very fundamentals of our society. This is an extrapolation for which I can't find the historical justification.

Informed by Foucault's theorizing, new directions should not be prescriptive or based on old concepts of unionizing or "at will" employment, because all of these old notions were at the root of past domination and oppression; if anything, there is justification for principles as opposed to dogmatic or universal prescription.

Principles to Facilitate Contingent Collectivism

Although contexts will vary, other charter schools can learn from the understandings of WCS teachers and facilitate their own version of *contingent collectivism* if they abide by the following principles.

Commitment to Teachers as Intellectuals

If they are to learn from the WCS example, charter schools need to begin with the idea that teachers are intellectuals. If the legacy of the charter movement merely carves out a niche for market-driven, anti-intellectual forces to replicate the same domination of students and teachers, then the movement will have merely replaced one oppressive system with another.

Commitment to Teachers as Change Agents

WCS teachers demonstrated that an education reform movement in the interest of counterhegemonic action can be facilitated by teachers who work as agents of change. Much like community organizers, teachers who are committed to working as change agents are interested in far more than student literacy and numeracy. This inquiry of WCS teacher understandings highlights that urban education reform needs to begin with teachers and cannot be a top-down mandate.

Commitment to Counterhegemonic Ideology and Action

In counterhegemonic fashion, WCS teachers created "indices" and emancipatory projects that reflected a Gramscian informal ideology. The teacher-developed efforts to create an index for Social Responsibility, Higher Order Thinking, and Post-Secondary Readiness are completely antithetical to the mandates of API. This counterhegemonic action and ideology is evidence of a kind blend between the mandates of the state and of a counterhegemonic "informal education"

ideological framework. Charter developers can learn a lot about the latter commitment to a critical and liberatory pedagogy.

Commitment to the Dialectical/Perpetual Unfolding of "Stages of Education"

Rather than expecting charters to be the panacea "Last School," we must, more usefully, embrace the perpetually unfolding stages of education. The contingent nature of a teacher collective agency that can counter the charter movement may feature an original thesis (like the WCS teacher disillusionment) then negated by an antithesis (like the WCS teacher agency). The latter negation will lead to a new synthesis for that particular education effort. Hegel formulated his theories in similar dialectical fashion by stating that each dialectical stage in any historical process is the synthesis of the contradictions inherent in the preceding stage (Hegel, 1874).

Commitment to Anti-prescriptive Change

George Orwell (1946) successfully documented the danger of being prescriptive about progressive change in his classic allegory entitled *Animal Farm.* If the next dialectical stage after the charter school movement does not account for Orwell's allegory of prescriptive dogmatism, a danger looms of reproducing an indifferent corruption .

Implications for Charter School Leaders

The example of the WCS democratization effort can show current and future charter school leaders that a teacher-centered approach to decision-making is the best way to facilitate student-centered learning. Top-down approaches to curricular and pedagogical decision-making only model and perpetuate an antidemocratic culture. To assume that charter schools leaders have an innate ability to avoid the dangers of dogmatism is to be ignorant of Orwell's warnings.

Therefore, charter school leaders who abide by contingent collectivism would be wise to foster a change effort, but then step aside to fully democratize whatever those efforts are; the latter approach is the key to preserving democracy.

Conclusion

This study chronicled the dialectical negation of disillusionment with the rise of a WCS-specific teacher agency. It is important to note that the results were highly contingent to the WCS context. In preparing to conduct this narrative inquiry, the literature informed me that highlighting teacher agency in this context can lead to a more critical understanding of how decision-making processes at charter schools can go from a model that is closed to teachers to one that is more inclusive. However, a traditional understanding of teacher agency only scratched the surface by noting that, in general terms, teachers have the capacity to carry out social change alongside the young people they teach.

The literature did not fully account for the paradoxical context at WCS. At WCS, the school leadership welcomed curricular and pedagogical decision-making becoming less centralized and more line with the WCS mission. A packaged universal understanding of agency is questionable because Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have reminded us that our conception of teacher agency should not be essentialized and reduced to a binary in which teacher agency can heroically defeat oppressive structures.

The teachers consistently spoke of how the specific historical context of WCS made it possible for the democratization of decision-making. Graduation Plus was the educational approach in place before the teacher led effort, but that partnership began to dissolve halfway through the third year of the school. Therefore, an important factor in having the teachers

assume decision-making of curriculum and instruction at WCS was the end of the partnership with Graduation Plus. If WCS had kept its partnership with Graduation Plus, the stage for the development of the CAM Manual and the increased teacher inclusion would not have occurred. Although pointing out the very progressive nature of the WCS staff and their expectations of collaborative decision-making at WCS is necessary, the accessing of their agency was contingent upon the historical context of the change in curricular partners at WCS.

The last point related to the this special context is that WCS was launched at the very same time in which the Los Angeles school district began the process of laying off thousands of teachers on annual basis. There is much to be said about this point because the kinds of talented teachers that opted to choose employment at WCS did so at a moment in the history of education in Los Angeles where few alternatives presented themselves other than working in charters.

Yet, more nuances are at play in the dialectical developments at WCS. At no point in the democratization of the curricular and pedagogical decision-making was there any resistance to this teacher push for more open and collaborative processes. Ultimately, this lack of WCS administrative resistance allowed for a rather seamless move toward the democratization of curricular and pedagogical decision-making, and it is yet another example of the need for more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of these developments.

The lesson from this study is that other charter school developers have much to learn—if they agree to foster a kind of contingent collectivism that honors, respects, and validates the notion that future of education rests not upon bureaucrats but upon the degree to which teachers are able to foster the emancipatory education our schools need.

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Appendix A

THE GRADUATION PLUS COMPETENCIES

(Content adapted from the Diploma Plus Training Manual)

What are the Graduation Plus Competencies?

Diploma Plus uses a competency-based and standards-aligned approach to shape curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Diploma Plus Competencies are designed to help facilitate rigorous and relevant understanding in your classroom. Competencies highlight what is most essential in a discipline and, when used to their full potential, support students in *mastering the standards* and provide a framework for teachers to authentically assess student work. A set of DP Competencies has been identified for: English language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health and fitness, foreign language, language acquisition, visual and performing arts, technology, career and technical education, and personal skills.

The Diploma Plus Competencies emphasize the critical thinking skills that students need to use and master as they develop knowledge in different areas. When learning happens within a meaningful context where it can be applied, rather than in a vacuum of dates, formulas, and facts, the learner sees value in what s/he is working on and becomes invested in the outcomes. As teachers, we recognize and value this. Our work often reflects this as we try to facilitate deep understanding for our students. However, traditional methods don't always support what we instinctively know is good teaching. Competencies are designed to do just that.

APPENDIX B

GRADUATION PLUS COMPETENCIES IN MATH

(Content adapted from the Diploma Plus Training Manual)

Competencies	**Absence of Evidence 0**	**Emerging** (Remember) **1**	**Capable** (Understand) **2**	**Bridging** (Apply) **3**	**Proficient** (Analyze) **4**	**Advanced** (Evaluate/ Create) **5**
M01. <u>Problem Solving</u>: Solve mathematical problems.		Identify problem statement and associated information.	State problem in one's own words or visually illustrates the problem. Make educated guess for what problem solving strategy is appropriate to use. Generate educated guess for possible solution.	Apply relevant mathematical information and knowledge to generate solution(s). Show method of problem solving textually or visually.	Generate and test different problem solving strategies for a problem. Demonstrate problem solving through using different strategies.	Adapt and combine appropriate problem solving strategies. Evaluate and defend different problem solving strategies.

Competencies	Absence of Evidence 0	Emerging (Remember) 1	Capable (Understand) 2	Bridging (Apply) 3	Proficient (Analyze) 4	Advanced (Evaluate/ Create) 5
M02. Reasoning and Proof: Reason about mathematical or real world patterns; make and prove related conjectures.		Identify mathematical or real-world patterns and attempt to make conjectures.	Describe general properties and/or relationships between elements in a problem. Classify properties and/or relationships within a problem.	Apply conjectures or generalizations to a problem. Produce examples to support conjectures.	Investigate mathematical or real world patterns by considering a range of examples. Construct valid arguments.	Discriminate patterns and/or generalizations that lead to a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. Compare and critique patterns and/or mathematical arguments.
M03. Quantitative Reasoning[1]: Produce, use, and comprehend quantitative information in real-world situations.		Select appropriate math concepts, facts, and skills related to real-world situations.	Explain appropriate math concepts, facts and skills related to real-world situations.	Apply appropriate math concepts, facts and skills related to real-world situations.	Manipulate appropriate math concepts, facts and skills to investigate and solve real-world situations and support ideas mathematically.	Formulate real-world situations that involve particular math concepts, facts or skills and use mathematics to investigate and propose solutions. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of chosen mathematical concepts, facts and skills used to describe real-world situations.

APPENDIX C

DEVELOPING COMPETENCY AND STANDARDS-BASED PERFORMANCE TASKS

(Content Adapted from Diplomas Plus Training Manual)

Directions: In the chart below, list a standard/topic/skill that you may teach your students. Then, use the competency rubrics to identify at least one competency that could measure that standard. Finally, list a performance task that you can give the students to help show that they have mastered the competency and standard.

Standard: Topic or Skill to be taught	**Competency:** that can measure how well a student knows the standard(s)	**Performance Task:** that can show that students have mastered the competency and standard
NYS Standard 4: Students will listen and write for information and understanding: Note taking	**E 06. Writing Process- Students will employ a wide range of writing strategies and processes to generate and edit written communication**	**Students will listen to a documentary on the Harlem Renaissance and use the notes taken to create a timeline of the major events and historical figures of the Harlem Renaissance**

APPENDIX D

VENN DIAGRAM ON COMPETNCIES AND STANDARDS

(Content Adapted from Diplomas Plus Training Manual)

Directions: Label the left circle, “competencies” and the right circle, “Standards”. List all of the distinguishing characteristics of both competencies and standards in their appropriate circles and list the shared characteristics in the center oval.

APPENDIX E

COURSE DESIGN TEMPLATE

(Content Adapted from Diplomas Plus Training Manual)

Purpose: To support teachers in designing competency and standards based course in a performance-based system

Course Title: GP Level- identify a creative, thematic course title and the DP level

The Harlem Renaissance: Presentation Level

Course Description-briefly describe the major theme, objectives, topics and activities of the course. Detail how the course will be relevant to skills students need for **state assessments, graduation and life beyond high school**.

This course exposes students to the literature of the great writers of the Harlem Renaissance Era. Students will explore the impact that the Harlem Renaissance and its writers had on the American consciousness about race and the contributions of the talents of People of color.

The course will also provide students with an opportunity to build their skills in writing and analysis based upon the assigned literature. Students will learn and practice the ELA Regents tasks 3 and 4 of comparing and contrasting two pieces of literature and writing about literature based upon a common theme. Students will also gain real world experiences in basic research skills, note taking, collaborative project management and oral presentation. These skills will support their transition to both college and the world of work.

Course Units- Identify the Units of study and for each unit specify: length of time; the power standards/topic; GP Competencies to be measured and performance-based tasks that will assess the level of mastery of the competencies and standards.

Unit Objective and focus ***(Length in weeks)***	**CA Power Standard/Content/Skill**	**GP Competencies**	**Unit formative and summative Benchmarks** ***(Performance-based Tasks)***
Unit #1 Students will be able to create an article to contribute to a class project: Harlem Renaissance Times Project Time: 1 week (5 days	Students will read, write and listen for information and understanding Students will use audio/visual and written resources to research information for writing Students will take notes to gather information for writing	E02 Bias/Authors Voice E06 Writing Process	Students will act as local school newspaper writers and contribute 1 completed Article for the class Harlem Renaissance Times Class Project
Unit#2 Students will be able to write a feature article w/ a fictitious Q&A on an Harlem Renaissance Writer of their Choice and Present on that author to the class Time: 2 weeks (7-10 days	Students will read, write and listen for information and understanding Students will use audio/visual and written resources to research information for writing Students will take notes to gather information for writing	E06 Writing Process E07 Idea Development E11 Oral Communication	Students will act as writers and researchers and contribute 1 completed feature article per group of 2 students to be presented at a class showcase called: Writer's of the Harlem Renaissance
Unit#3 Students will be able to analyze several poems by the authors Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen	Students will read and write for literary analysis Students analyze themes and works written by the same author.	E02 Author/Bias Voice E03 Reaction to Text E04 Language Analysis E05 Genre Analysis	Students will act as literary critics and write a literary biography/critique of the works of one of the Authors studied in this unit,

Unit Objective and focus ***(Length in weeks)***	**CA Power Standard/Content/Skill**	**GP Competencies**	**Unit formative and summative Benchmarks** ***(Performance-based Tasks)***
Time: 3 weeks	Students will compare and contrasts themes and styles of two different authors		incorporating connections between key writings and the writer's lived experiences
Unit#4 Students will be able to analyze several poems/short stories by the authors Zora Neal Hurston and Lorraine Hansberry Time: 3 weeks	Students will read and write for literary analysis Students analyze themes and works written by the same author. Students will compare and contrasts themes and styles of two different authors	E02 Author/Bias Voice E03 Reaction to Text E04 Language Analysis E05 Genre Analysis	Students will act as test designers by writing an essay question that students could answer modeled after Task 3 on the NYS English Regents style Essay. They will then write a sample Level 5 or 6 Essay that requires an analysis of a literary piece by Zora Neal Hurston and Lorraine Hansberry
Unit#5 Students will write 4 original poems or one original short story to contribute to a class anthology: Harlem Renaissance on the Harlem Renaissance	Students will read and write for literary analysis Students will create original poetry around a central theme or in a style of their own or an author read in class	E02 Bias/Author Voice E03 Reaction to Text E06 Writing Process	Students will act as poets-writers and create and present their work in the style of one of the writers studied in this unit. They will hand in: A collection of 4 original poems Or 1 original short story for class anthologies and Presentations to the class

APPENDIX F

FEATURE ARTICLE ON HISTORICAL FIGURE OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

(Content Adapted from Diplomas Plus Training Manual)

Situation: You are writing an article on a Writer of the Harlem Renaissance to be included in the class project: The Harlem Renaissance Times. You should use each step of the writing process and use multiple resources (notes from the documentary; 2 articles on the, "Writers of the Harlem Renaissance"; Your individual internet research) to complete the task.
Task:

As you complete your Article on a Writer from the Harlem Renaissance be sure to:

- Include evidence of all steps in the writing process: brainstorming, first draft, revision tools (check lists, rubrics etc). and published piece
- Identify significant life experiences of the writer
- Explain how the figures' life experiences influenced the meaning, themes and perspectives of their works
- Argue which experiences had the most significant impact on the writers work and give evidence from at least one piece of their writing
- Evaluate the thoughts and views that others have made of the writer of your choice

APPENDIX G

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

(Content Adapted from Diplomas Plus Training Manual)

Below is a table indicating key and essential elements of an authentic assessment. In looking at an assessment document, review it for the presence of each criterion.

- What is the evidence and proof that criterion was filled? Write the example or a summary of it in the "Evidence" column.
- If it is absent from the document, write a suggestion for what should be included so that criterion is fulfilled in the "Opportunity" column.

CRITERIA *The assessment requires the student to . . .*	EVIDENCE *Based on the criterion, what proof exists in the assessment?*	OPPORTUNITY *If this criterion is absent, what recommendation would you give to include it and thereby improve this assessment?*
Show how well they know the content, doing so by connecting what they are learning WITH HOW they can use it.		
Demonstrate mastery of a variety of skills learned over a period of time.		
Rehearse for the challenges and ambiguities in the real world by applying skills and knowledge learned in meaningful problems that adults might encounter in their professional, civic and personal life.		
Perform higher levels of thinking from Bloom's taxonomy (evaluate, synthesize,		
Integrate the use of technology, arts, and/or other content areas.		
Relate their experiences, culture and/or interests with the assignment.		
Reflect upon his/her learning experience.		

APPENDIX H

CAM INTRODUCTION: A WORD FROM AN INSTRUCTOR

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

Freedom is rare; freedom to explore, create, interpret, and discover seem like distant concepts amongst a reality of deadlines, money, and consequences. In a classroom, teachers are often charged with the task of creating an alternate reality, where incorrect answers become stepping-stones to understanding, defeat is an opportunity to re-grow, and space, or life, is ultimately *safe.* It is within these classroom walls that young people are afforded the freedom and the opportunities to learn and grow, with hopes that the lessons they learn will cultivate their success in the *real* world.

It is also in these same classrooms that the very freedom to learn is being compromised by encroaching state standards and outcome-driven administrators. High stakes testing has effectively begun to dismantle effective teaching, and thereby reduce authentic learning to a recollection of ideas.

This manual is one step in the march of reclaiming an "authentic education." Created and developed entirely by WCS teachers, the CAM manual represents the freedom to teach, assess, and collaborate with students in relevant and authentic ways. By connecting each interdisciplinary project to a community action project, students develop a unique relationship between the classroom and the real world. Here, young people are faced with the real-life challenges of planning, organizing, and ultimately working toward solving social issues that impact their communities.

The *CAM* Manual is a progressive, collaborative, and interdisciplinary instructional approach that fosters the growing personal, social, and intellectual power of young people who have been disenfranchised by society through authentic, inquiry-driven,

project-based learning. Through various collaboration processes, community members, community based organizations, instructors, educational leadership, and students alike participate in the empowering process of gathering the diverse assets of the community to build meaningful community advancement and change.

-CAM Committee Teacher

APPENDIX I

WCS CAM MODEL INDICES and the RECLAMATION of TEACHER/STUDENT AGENCY

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

In this era of accountability where most schools blindly abide by the mandates of misguided high stakes testing, WCS teachers and students are informed by an agency that authors the kind of educational innovation that actively counters political, economic, and social injustice. To that end, WCS has recently developed the Higher Order Thinking Index (HOTI), the Post-Secondary Readiness Index (PSRI), and the Social Responsibility Index (SRI) to highlight the pioneering work being done by WCS students and teachers. The HOTI, PSRI, and SRI are WCS's proactive attempt to switch the focus away from anti-intellectual testing efforts measured by the API (Academic Performance Index) of a school.

This bold but logical approach is a deliberate attempt to capture the holistic work that takes place at a Weedpatch on a daily basis. If WCS were to only obsess on the anti-intellectual, testing-centered API (which accounts for only the lowest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy) then WCS students would never be able to have the higher order thinking discussions necessary to create new solutions for social change. In actual fact, if WCS solely focused on the API and ignored the kind of authentic learning experiences that are focused on social change, it would be yet another oppressive institution that blocks the emancipation of impoverished young people of color.

In essence, the WCS indices give meaning, substance, and socially responsible purpose to learning. When teachers assign a project at WCS, the project will be structured to blend CA state standards into an authentic assessment that is centered on higher order thinking, focused on post-secondary readiness, and informed by social responsibility. These indices would be accounted

for and quantified in a statistically viable manner that would ultimately provide YCSC with a measure at both the school and site level. These numbers will have invaluable meaning and relevance.

These alternative measures inherently assume that students and teachers are intellectuals. In ***Teachers as Intellectuals*** (1988), Henry Giroux makes the bold statement that teachers should think of themselves as transformative intellectuals. Giroux writes that the transformative intellectual is an agent of change who seeks to include schools as intellectually and ideologically contested spaces where power relations are subtly taking shape. For Giroux, the transformative intellectual is carrying out the academic work that can then lead to political change. Through the inclusion of student-centered learning processes and measures (as opposed to school-centered measures like an API) WCS is seeking to honor both students and teachers as transformative intellectuals. Like Giroux, WCS argues that we must be able to thoroughly unmask the fact that the educational process is often a struggle for the minds of young people. A student or teacher intellectual at WCS is able to be an advocate for the disadvantaged and the dominated by problematizing and historicizing the educational system.

Accounting for success or failure in the latter endeavor can never be accomplished via an API and is the essential reason why WCS is proactive about this effort. WCS, therefore, seeks to be accountable to this mission and vision through its development of the Higher Order Thinking Index, the Post-Secondary Readiness Index, and the Social Responsibility Index.

The following pages include a rubric breakdown of the WCS CAM Model Indices. There are 3 WCS CAM Model Indices: Higher-Order Thinking, Post- Secondary Readiness, and Social Responsibility. Each index is divided into various "assets" that WCS would like to help each student master and develop during their educational experience with us. Reference the

following pages while planning for site, course, unit, and Authentic Performance Task (APT) purposes.

APPENDIX J

CRITICAL FRIENDS CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

(Complete once per month, per teacher – 3 times per trimester, 9 times per year)

Observer Name:_____ Date: _____
Teacher Name:_____ Class Period &
Course:_____

PRE-OBSERVATION
Teacher is looking for feedback on: *(Circle One)* Postsecondary Readiness / Social Responsibility Specific Asset(s):
The lesson objective is:

OBSERVATION
Notes from the observation:

Please **rank** the following teaching strategies from 1-4, 4 being the best and 1 needing the most improvement. No two categories should have the same ranking.

Rank	Category	Comments
_____	**Classroom Management** - Manages student behavior in a positive constructive manner.	
_____	**Rapport with students -** Creates and maintains positive, supportive climate where individual contributions are valued.	
_____	**Clear Expectations** - Communicates the objective and purpose of the lesson and tasks clearly.	
_____	**Content** - Teacher demonstrates command of subject matter and links lessons to content standards and to the WCS mission.	

Critical Friends Classroom Observation (cont.)

POST-OBSERVATION
The teacher's strengths:
Constructive Feedback/Areas for growth:
Implications for own classroom instruction:

APPENDIX K

RUBRICS BASED on STUDENT ASSETS

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

Various skills and experiences that a student has, as related to the: Higher Order Thinking Index (HOTI), Post-Secondary Readiness Index (PSRI), and Social Responsibility Index (SRI).

- **Career/Academic Exploration -** *Students will demonstrate a wide spectrum of exposure and participation in the career/academic field of their choice.*
- **Communication -** *Students will be able to communicate with clarity and precision orally, in writing, using technology and while listening.*
- **Critical Thinking -** *Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion, defend an argument, problem solve, use reasoning, and question in order to achieve success in their chosen pathway.*
- **Institutional Responsibility -** *Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.*
- **Interpersonal Responsibility -** *Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive interpersonal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.*
- **Interpersonal Skills -** *Students will demonstrate the positive development of interpersonal social skills such as networking, conflict resolution and leadership.*
- **Intrapersonal Responsibility -** *Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive personal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.*
- **Personal Skills -** *Students will demonstrate the characteristics of positive personal social skills such as emotional management and physical health, and in addition, is able to demonstrate his/her ability to maintain healthy relationships.*
- **Resource Skills -** S*tudents will demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to use a plethora of different resources from their community.*
- **Self-Awareness -** *Students will be able to reflect on and evaluate their personal goals, obstacles, and strengths.*
- **Study Skills -** *Students will have the research, note-taking, organization, test-taking, and comprehension skills necessary to succeed in their chosen path.*

APPENDIX L

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INDEX

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

Social Responsibility Index (SRI) Rubric						
Category	**Assets**	**1 Remember**	**2 Understand**	**3 Apply**	**4 Analyze**	**5 Evaluate/ Create**
Social Responsibility Students will have the socially responsible skills necessary for confronting oppressive inequities and working towards social justice.	**Intrapersonal** *Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive personal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.*	Students can identify the definition of social justice and internalized oppression	Students comprehend the multiple meanings of social justice and oppression of or within individuals	Students can generalize impact of oppression on personal agency/ self-determination	Students can compare and contrast multiple manifestations of oppression in their own biases	Students a) articulate implications of oppression on their personal development, b) creates, and c) implement plans towards achieving individual empowerment
	Interpersonal *Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive interpersonal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.*	Students can identify the definition of social justice and interpersonal oppression	Students comprehend the multiple meanings of social justice and oppression between individuals and/or groups	Students can generalize impact of oppression on interpersonal relations	Students can compare and contrast multiple manifestations of oppression between individuals' and/or groups' biases	Students a) articulate implications of oppression on their team process, b) creates, and c) implements plans towards achieving team or group empowerment
	Institutional *Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate*	Students can identify the definition of social justice and institutional	Students comprehend the multiple meanings of social justice and	Students can generalize impact of systemic oppression on	Students can compare and contrast multiple perspectives and texts	Students a) articulate implications of institutional oppression

Social Responsibility Index (SRI) Rubric						
Category	**Assets**	**1 Remember**	**2 Understand**	**3 Apply**	**4 Analyze**	**5 Evaluate/ Create**
	socially-responsive institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.	oppression	systematic oppression	individual, interpersonal, and institutional affairs	within institutions to uncover the multifaceted dynamics of oppression	on the collective, b) creates, and c) implements plans towards achieving community empowerment

APPENDIX M

SITE COLLABORATION TOOL

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

This tool is intended to provide all WCS partners (WCS and Weedpatch program staff) to have a vested interest and opportunity to participate in the trimester and unit planning process. At the top, all partners will have an opportunity to create the "essential question" of the year and for each trimester. For more guidance in creating an "essential question," refer to the appendix reading "What is a good guiding question?" Sites may complete the site collaboration tool as they deem fit for their purposes.

APPENDIX N

WCS SITE COLLABORATION SAMPLE

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

ACADEMIC YEAR THEME/ESSENTIAL QUESTION (EQ)
How do we liberate ourselves?

Time Period	Essential Question	Culminating APT Description	Breakdown of APT (by course – label as needed)	Resources Needed:
Trimester 1 "GO TO THEM"	**"How we liberate ourselves?"**	Students will attend and/or submit information that is to be presented at a local non-profit/government meeting. Students will employ critical thinking skills to problem solve the logistics of the law; exploration and discovery of community resources they could utilize to create and help gain support for the law in the community. In this APT, students will trying to bring about institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice	English: Students write an editorial, requesting for more unbiased media coverage. Students will also inform the general public about media censorship and corporate control of the media. Science: Organize a debate on human cloning around the question: "Should we clone human beings? What rights should human clones have?" Math: Students will create an informational pamphlet in which they include graphs and charts comparing and contrasting freedom in different countries and the quality of life in those countries. Social Studies: Create a youtube project demonstrating how Constitution is both a source of freedom and restrictions. Specifically focusing on the rights given and taken away by the Constitution. Life Skills: Research local civil liberty groups and attend one of their meetings, where they will	• Video camera, calculators, internet • Projected Cost: $0

			distribute the composited information in all of their classes. Students will take turns informing attendees about their findings.	
Trimester 2 "COME TO US"	**"How do we liberate our communities ?"**	Students will invite local government and organizations to a civil liberties workshop. Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive personal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.	English: Essay comparing conceptions of freedom and liberation in poetry of Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, and Derek Walcott.	• Internet, calculators, paper for invitations and flyers, refreshments for workshop • Projected Cost: $100
			Science: Create a documentary about genetics asking: "Do we have free will or are our choices determined by our genes?"	
			Math: Graph linear equations on a plane that represent different liberation movements around the world.	
			Social Studies: Create a website that explains to other young people how the Bill of Rights affects them. Propose changes that will make people more free.	
			Life Skills: Contact local government agencies and non-profit groups that should be invited to a civil liberties workshop. Create invitation and advertisements. Organize logistics of workshop.	
Trimester 3 "US TO US"	**"How do we liberate ourselves? As a society?"**	Students will create a podcast directed at other youth and post said podcast on internet. Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion, defend an argument, problem solve, use reasoning, and question in order to achieve success in their chosen pathway. Students	English: Write a biographical essay about someone in your family that you consider liberated.	• Calculators, internet • Projected Cost: $0
			Science: Create a pamphlet describing the work of the Innocence Project, which uses forensic science to liberate unjustly incarcerated people.	
			Math: Use quadratic equations to describe the cyclical pattern of politics and revolution in the writings of Plato, Hegel, and Che.	
			Social Studies: What political system offers the most liberation? Compare different systems and create your own.	

		will demonstrate a wide spectrum of exposure and participation in the career/academic field of their choice. Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive interpersonal and/or institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.	Life Skills: Choose a response to the Essential Question. Create an online podcast in which they present information gathered in other classes that supports their chosen answer. Post the podcast on local youth empowerment websites.	

APPENDIX O

COLLABORATIV TEACHER COMMUNITY PROTOCOL

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

In the current education climate, it can often be difficult to find time for reflection. The dutiful teacher has to juggle many demands from students and communities alike. We, as teachers, are said to take on the roles of counselor, role-model, and at times even benefactor. And yet while all of these duties take their roots in passion and empathy for others, we sometimes find ourselves isolated inside of a vacuum consisting of only student and self. We, however, exist also as an organization, a culture, a school, and a *community*. As these things, it is necessary make time to communicate, reflect and analyze our own practices, as well as those of others. In an ongoing effort to improve on what we have, and identify what we don't- we have created the following collaborative teacher community protocol:

I. Year-Long Goal Setting

- Teachers should set **three goals** in the areas of Higher Order Thinking*, Post-secondary Readiness, and Social Responsibility* using the Year-Long Goal Setting tool.
- Year-long goals should be revisited **each trimester** using the Year-Long Goal Reflection tool.

II. Critical Friends Classroom Observation

- Teachers should observe a peer *at least* **once per month.**
- Follow-up conversations should take place on the **same day** as the observation.

Note: *This is not meant to be a judgmental or evaluative exercise. It is an opportunity for you to share your work-in-progress with peers and receive thoughtful feedback. The intent is that the comments you receive will help you to deepen and improve your work and that your colleagues will have a better understanding and appreciation of the work that you plan to do with your students.*

APPENDIX P

WCS COURSE SYLLABUS SAMPLE

(Content Adapted from ACE Manual)

Trimester: _____1_____

Course Title
Government
Essential Question/Theme
How do we liberate ourselves?
Course Description: Themes, goals, outcomes, rational for connection to real life and critical thinking
Students will understand the idea of liberating ourselves as individuals as well as citizens. They will analyze the Constitution, the rights and privileges given within its language and look back into its history to see how these same rights have been violated within the system. They will understand its challenges through the different interpretations of the Constitution as well as how those interpretations manifested within major shifts in history, particularly in Supreme Court cases. Through this course, students will be asked to propose ways that they can "liberate" themselves in understanding the system they live in, its flaws, and what can be done to change things.

	Essential Question/ Theme	**Content Standards**	**Post-Secondary Readiness & Social Responsibility Indices Assets**	**Authentic Performance Task (Project) Description**
Unit 1	**How we liberate ourselves?**	12.1, 12.2	- **PSRI –** Academic Skills – Communication Students will be able to communicate with clarity and precision orally, in writing, using technology and while listening. - **SRI –** Intrapersonal - Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive personal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.	Create a YouTube project demonstrating how Constitution is both a source of freedom and restrictions. Specifically focusing on the rights given and taken away by the Constitution.

	Essential Question/ Theme	Content Standards	Post-Secondary Readiness & - Social Responsibility Indices Assets	Authentic Performance Task (Project) Description
Unit 2	**How do we liberate our communities?**	12.5	- **PSRI –** Academic Skills – Critical Thinking - Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion, defend an argument, problem solve, use reasoning, and question in order to achieve success in their chosen pathway. - **SRI -** Interpersonal - Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive interpersonal change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.	Create a website that explains to other young people how the bill of rights affects them. Propose changes that will make people more free.
Unit 3	**How do we liberate ourselves? As a society?**	12.6 12.8	- **PSRI –** Exploration and Discovery of Pathways – Resources - Students will demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to use a plethora of different resources from their community. - **SRI –** Institutional - Students will be able to articulate, engage, and initiate socially-responsive institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice.	Compare different political systems and create a panel that discusses what the advantages and disadvantages are for both systems and how people can be liberated.

Culminating Project Description: Interdisciplinary themes and connections between subject matters
Students will join a local campaign to inform their community about the issues most relevant to their friends and family. They will work to increase awareness of the rights they have as citizens as well as non-citizens. Students will work to spread information of the resources that are available to the community. The Youtube video and the website would be in accordance with promoting the campaign. The panel could be a presentation where the issues of the campaign can be presented within the context of the different governments.

APPENDIX Q

WCS AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK (APT) STUDENT HANDOUT SAMPLE

(Content Adapted From ACE Manual)

Course: US History B Trimester: 2 Unit / APT # : 3
Essential Question/Theme
How do we liberate ourselves?
Description of APT
We have just spent our last unit studying the causes and effects of the American Civil Rights Movement. In this unit, we spent a majority of our time covering the different non-violence strategies that civil rights activists used to try to bring about concrete change in the United States. In particular, we highlighted the use and effects of strategies such as marches, boycotts, sit-ins, freedom summer, and using the American judicial system to try to obtain civil rights for many in the United States. For this project, you are to pick what you believe to be the most effective and significant non-violent civil rights strategy (boycotts, legal means, marches, sit-ins, freedom summer etc.) in order to crate a pamphlet on the strategy of your choice where you document the critical components of the strategy, the groups and people who used the strategy, how it was used during the civil rights movement as well as your evaluation of the strategies success in the overall movement and how you believe this strategy eventually helped liberate disenfranchised groups in the United States by helping them gain the civil rights they previously lacked. In addition, you are to identify a contemporary issue that you believe is negatively affecting your community and that is essentially holding many people back from truly being free and liberated. Using this issue and the aforementioned non-violence civil rights movement strategies, you are to pick TWO non-violence civil rights strategies and use them to create a policy proposal for a law that would help you liberate yourself and your community from the issue you identified above. Moreover, in this policy proposal for a law, you will need to document how you will use the non-violence civil rights tactics you chose to create your proposed law and achieve its passing.
Date Due: March 2, 2012

Student Assessment Rubric					
Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Learning Objectives	1 Remember	2 Understand	3 Apply	4 Analyze	5 Eval/Create
1. Pamphlet Page 1 -2: Identification of the non-violence strategy and the groups or people who used it	Student is unable to list the non-violence strategies used in the civil rights movement	Student is able to identify several of the non-violence strategies used in the civil rights movement and the different groups and people who used these strategies	Student is able to describe the different components of non-violence civil rights strategies and the different ways in which these strategies were used by groups and people throughout the movement	Student is able to describe the different components of non-violence civil rights strategies and the different ways in which these strategies were used by groups and people throughout the movement and in addition is also able to identify and describe several of the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies	Student is able to identify and describe different non-violent civil rights movement strategies and is able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies in order to develop a plan that documents how these strategies could be improved to be more effective
2. Pamphlet Page 3 -4: Description of strategies use in the civil rights movement and evaluation of its success	Student is unable to identify and describe how non-violent strategies were used	Student is able to identify how some non-violent strategies were used in the civil rights	Student is able to identify and describe how non-violent strategies were used in the civil rights	Student is able to identify and describe how non-violent strategies were used in the civil	Student is able to document and evaluate the use of non-violence strategies in the civil rights

	in the civil rights movement	movement	movement and is also able to document the success of these strategies	rights movement and is also able to analyze the success of these strategies by documenting the different ways in which some groups considered them to be successful while other believed they were a failure	movement and is able to list and describe the strengths and weaknesses of each in order to draw up a plan of how they can be improved to ensure stronger success
3. Policy proposal for law page 1: The components of the law	Student is unable to create an idea for a law	Student is able to identify an idea for a law	Student is able to identify and describe an idea for a law	Student is able to identify and describe an idea for a law and is also able to analyze some of the strengths and weaknesses of their proposed law	Student is able to identify and describe the different components of their law and is able to evaluate their laws strengths and weaknesses in order to develop a plan of how their law could be modified to ensure its success
4. Policy proposal for law page 2: Documentation of how the law will help	Student is unable to identify how their law can help	Student is able to identify how their law can help	Student is able to identify and describe how their law can help liberate	Student is able to identify and describe how their law can help	Student is able to identify and describe their law and is also able to

liberate the community.	liberate their community	liberate their community	their community	liberate their community and in addition is able to analyze and break down their law in order to describe the different groups in their community that that their law will help liberate	evaluate their law and in detail describe exactly how their law will help liberate and make life better for the different members of their community
5. Student will write a reflection where they describe and evaluate the prior knowledge and the assets they used in their project	Student is unable to identify the asset(s) they used in their APT	Student identifies the assets used in their APT	Student justified purpose and usages of some of the assets they used in their APT	Student justified purpose and usages of all of the assets they used in their APT	- Student evaluated performance on APT - Student created a plan to enhance knowledge and assets
Post-Secondary Readiness (PSR) Assets	1 Remember	2 Understand	3 Apply	4 Analyze	5 Eval/Create
Academic - Critical thinking skills to problem solve the logistics of the law; exploration and discovery of community resources they could utilize to create and help	Students are able to list some of the critical thinking skills needed to achieve success in their chosen path.	Students are able to understand some of the critical thinking skills needed to achieve success in their chosen path.	Students are able to apply and use some of the critical thinking skills needed to achieve success in their chosen path.	Students are able to analyze which critical thinking skills they need to succeed in their chosen path.	Students evaluate their critical thinking skills in order to identity their strengths and weaknesses and are able to target their weaknesses

gain support for the law in the community.					and develop a plan to better these areas of growth.
Social Responsibility (SR) Assets	1 Remember	2 Understand	3 Apply	4 Analyze	5 Eval/Create
Institutional responsibility - Trying to bring about institutional change to work towards confronting oppression and achieving social justice	Students can identify the definition of social justice and institutional oppression	Students comprehend the multiple meanings of social justice and systematic oppression	Students can generalize impact of systemic oppression on individual, interpersonal, and institutional affairs	Students can compare and contrast multiple perspectives and texts within institutions to uncover the multifaceted dynamics of oppression	Students a) articulate implications of institutional oppression on the collective, b) creates, and c) implements plans towards achieving community empowerment

Overall Grade

	Higher Order Thinking (HOT)	Post-Secondary Readiness (PSR)	Social Responsibility (SR)
Numeric Grade	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5
Overall Grade (Average of HOT, PSR, & SR Scores)	◯	4 ◯	◯
Teacher Commentary			
Instructor feedback on student APT strengths, challenges, and area(s) of improvement:			

- Letter Grade:

Percentage Range	Bloom Score	Letter Grade
___% - ___%	5	A
___% - ___%	4	B
___% - ___%	3	C
___% - ___%	2	Incomplete
___% - ___%	1	Incomplete