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For-Profit Alternative Programs and Schools of Choice: Structuring Safety and College-for-All in an Era of Market-Based School Reform

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For-Profit Alternative Programs and Schools of Choice:
Structuring Safety and College-for-All in an Era of Market-Based School Reform

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Education

by

Alma L. Zaragoza-Petty

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2016
DEDICATION

To

my girls

Soul & Moon (Luna)

May you be inspired to work hard to accomplish your own dreams.

To

my other half

Jason Emmanuel

Thank you for your unrelenting support and love the last 6 years.
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

For-Profit Alternative Programs and Schools of Choice: Structuring Safety and College-for-All in an Era of Market-Based School Reform

By

Alma L. Zaragoza-Petty

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Professor Tesha Sengupta-Irving, Chair

Market-based school reform incentivizes schools to invest in the academic preparation and well-being of students. These imperatives, often articulated in terms of safety and the college preparation of students, are seen as issues traditional public schools have been unable to address adequately. In turn, alternative programs and schools of choice are positioned as viable solutions. Using critical ethnography methodology, this dissertation is based on a case study analysis of one such schooling site, and investigates to what extent this method of “new schooling” might, in fact, offer something different from traditional public schools. Further, my analysis asks to what extent this case of market-based school reform schooling counters deficit paradigms so often associated with the education of low-income youth of color, as this remains unclear in the literature. Drawing from sociopolitical and organizational behavior theory, I use a proactive versus reactive institutional framework in this analysis, finding that this case of alternative programs and schools of choice reflects a reactive position in which communities and schools are seen as the problem. I argue that this suggests a failure of market-based schooling to offer a unique counter-solution to traditional schooling for low-income youth of color. Through this analysis, I also identify missed opportunities to take a more proactive position in relation to both
students and communities, which would likely better assure the well-being of youth of color as well as offer a clearer solution to the failure of traditional schools to advance safety and college-readiness for all.
Introduction

To some, the rise of charter schools across the United States in the 1990s signified the solution to a seemingly crumbling educational system. Proponents of market-based education argued that parents choosing freely among schools would increase the quality of schools because schools would be forced to compete to retain students (Mora & Christianakis, 2011; Friedman, 2006), and so the dominant argument for market-driven school reform became that increased freedom of school choice would equal improved student achievement and social equity (Boyles, 2000; Cookson, 1992; Lubienski, 2008). These claims are predicated upon a reactive approach to traditional public schools and the students they serve, where both the schools and the students are seen as the problem, and which largely ignores historical and structural issues of inequity. Nearly 30 years after the rise of the charter school movement, whether these new schooling structures do, in fact, offer something different from traditional public schools remains unclear.

Due to dominant discourse and hegemonic beliefs of market-based school reform, national policy has ushered in the closure of “failing” traditional public schools in low-income communities of color (Lipman, 2013). In addition to their purported new schooling methods, these charter schools also contend with persistent deficit ideologies associated with children of color. Thus, in addition to investigating the extent to which market-based reforms change what traditional public schools do, it is also important to ask to what extent these new schooling methods work to counter deficit paradigms in relation to academic preparation and students’ social well-being, arguably the most relevant aspects of policy discourse regarding these youth (I discuss this in detail in Chapter 3).

In this dissertation, I draw on sociopolitical and organizational behavior theory (discussed in Chapter 1) to understand the “at-risk” deficit ideologies of students, and proactive versus
reactive organizational theory to understand the institutional response to youth of color, to whom “at risk” ideologies is often associated. The conceptual framework allows me to explore the relationship between this system of “new schooling” and deficit ideologies in the case of a for-profit alternative program located within a charter school designed to support “at risk” students. More generally, the use of the “at-risk” ideology is known as one that shifts blame away from historical and structural issues of inequities in schooling and onto individual academic performance and behavior (Brown, 2006, McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Tyack, 1993; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995; Wollons, 1993). Such an ideology reflects deficit discourse and invites a reactive approach toward the “riskiness” of youth along identity lines, such as ethnic or racial backgrounds (i.e., the at-risk Latino). Some education scholars (Fine, 1993, 1995; Lewis, 2003), however, contest this idea of “at-risk,” acknowledging the historical context in which schooling takes place (Abu El-Haj, 2010; Leonardo & Hunter, 2007; Paperson, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). In turn, understanding how educational institutions shaped by the current political economy and ideology respond to and actively resist deficit ideology could better position proactive institutional responses with students and families of color that focus on long-term, school-community collaborations.

Reactive institutional responses, such as creating incentives for schools to compete with one another for students has not fixed inequities in California’s charter and public schools, yet it has undeniably resulted in a new schooling context that is increasingly privatized and relatively understudied (Mora & Christianakis, 2011; Wells, 2002). I therefore became interested in studying how these new schooling contexts address prevailing concerns of academic achievement (e.g., achievement gaps) and well-being and safety in schools as they impact youth of color. I undertook a yearlong critical ethnographic case study of academic readiness and
safety in a for-profit, alternative program located within a charter school in California. The site for this study is Westgate Charter High (WGCH), a conversion school located in California, and At-Promise Academy (APA). APA is a hybrid alternative education program located within WGCH that serves low-income and ethnic- and racial-minority youth. The charter school itself was a traditional public school before it was taken over by a charter management organization in 2007 after it was determined to be unfit by the state in meeting annual benchmarks. In examining this context from a proactive versus reactive conceptual framework that acknowledges dominant discourse and hegemonic beliefs found in market-based school reform, my four research questions ask to what extent these new schooling methods innovate, remake, or reproduce practices known to exist in the traditional public school literature. Thus, this dissertation reflects a unique contribution to the study of market-based school reforms as embodied by for-profit hybrid alternative programs and schools of choice, i.e., charter schools (see Chapter 6).

Research Questions

My research questions are addressed in two separate chapters (Chapters 4 and 5). These questions are guided by market-based school reform policy that prioritizes the well-being (i.e., safety) and academic preparation—often articulated as college-readiness—of students (see Chapter 3 for a discussion on market-based school reform policy priorities). The analysis in Chapter 4 asks and answers the following questions:

1. How do school personnel structure order at Westgate Charter High School (WGCH)?
2. How does the structuring of order address students’ senses of safety?

And, the analysis in Chapter 5 asks and answers the questions:

3. How does WGCH structure a college-going culture?
4. How is At-Promise Academy (APA) a part of the structuring of a college-going culture at WGCH, if at all?

Organization of the Dissertation
In Chapter 1, I discuss the conceptual framework and pertinent literature informing my approach to the study. In Chapter 2, I describe the methods used to collect the data for this project and my analytic approach. Chapter 3 examines the history of for-profit alternative programs in California, and the role of various market-based school reform policies, explaining the growth of charter schools, and how market-based school reform, in general, has produced new schooling sites and methods. In addition, I outline how market-based school reform policy prioritizes college-readiness and safety. In Chapter 4, I examine how school personnel understand what it means to support the health and safety of their students, presenting ways school personnel structure what it means to be safe, and, in turn, how their definitions address students’ senses of safety. In addition, I discuss the unique context of the school and community, and consider the missed opportunities for more proactive approaches to assuring students’ safety. Chapter 5 focuses on how the charter management organization and the school personnel imagine college-ready students, and how this includes, or perhaps excludes, the role of the for-profit alternative program. I provide a discussion on how not all student goals are supported, despite the in-house hybrid alternative program within the charter school that is supposed to help accomplish this, turning the college-for-all curriculum model into a paradox of hope for students. Finally, in Chapter 6, I discuss my findings across the chapters as well as their implications, describing how my findings make a unique contribution to what is currently understood about the academic preparation and safety of students, complicating the view that market-based school reforms result in new-and-improved schooling sites and methods.
Chapter 1

In this chapter, I present my conceptual framework informed by sociopolitical and organizational behavior theories (Ball, 1994; Crant, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). The two kinds of literature that guide my conceptual framework reveal how the problems of traditional schooling, along with their solutions, are reflected in market-based school reform. For instance, the idea that students and traditional public schools are viewed as the problem suggests a reactive approach that consequently frames alternative programs and schools of choice, such as charters, as solutions. In addition, bridging these two literatures allows me to study institutional responses to students given market-based school reform priorities. For example, it allows me distinguishing between a proactive and a reactive institutional stance in schools in relation to ensuring the well-being and college preparation of low-income youth of color. Finally, through this proactive versus reactive conceptual framework, I argue that distinguishing between proactive and reactive institutional responses has implications for the reproduction of or challenge to at-risk ideologies.

The sections of this chapter are organized in the following manner: First, I utilize sociopolitical theory to understand how traditional schools that house these students come to be positioned as the problem, to which alternative programs and schools of choice become the solution. I discuss the ways market-based school reform has positioned alternative programs and schools of choice as reactive solutions to the problem of academic under-preparation associated with traditional schools. This is particularly impactful in describing the educational experiences of youth of color, whose academic performance and behavior, in a reactive framework, are seen as “risky,” and, ultimately, as a problem. Second, I elaborate on organizational behavior theory guiding the proactive versus reactive approaches to the framing of problems and solutions.
regarding the safety (or well-being) of students and their academic preparation in schools. I provide examples of each from the literature.

**Section One: Sociopolitical Theory**

Drawing on sociopolitical theory, I present how the well-being or safety of students, as well as their academic preparation, have been discussed since they became the focus of scholarly attention and policy reform in, and since, *A Nation at Risk* (1983). This landmark report, an open letter to the American people, expressed fear that, without proper and sustained efforts in education, the United States would no longer be the world leader in the economic marketplace. As McCarty (2012) points out, how the research and policy story is told matters. The “crisis” narrative prevalent in educational research and policy has constructed persistent and taken-for-granted ways of thinking about those who are the subjects of those policies (McCarty, 2012; Roe, 1994), specifically students and schools. For example, *A Nation at Risk* ushered in the era of understanding students not only as academically underprepared but also as particularly “at-risk,” while also positioning the schools that typically serve low-income youth of color as unable to prepare the students and keep them safe.

An ideological construction of students as “at-risk” constructs a “moral panic” that blames students and their families for the decline in their educational achievement (Cohen, 1980; Hall, 1978; McCarty, 2012; Roe, 1994; Roman, 1996). The rhetorical shift away from structural and ideological issues inherent in educational institutions and onto students was one of the ways youth of color became understood as at risk (Anyon, 2011; Apple & Weis, 1983). The rhetoric of at-risk students, though ideological, has material consequences for all students. In the past, the same communities to whom at-risk was attributed have also been pathologized as “retarded,” “crippled,” “undereducated,” “educationally disadvantaged,” and “culturally deprived,” among
many other deficit terms (for lists of other terms used, see Brown, 2006; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995; Tyack, 1993; Wollons, 1993).

Ongoing research on the labeling or categorizing of students examines the stereotyping of students as criminals via “zero-tolerance” policies in schools that grew out of state and federal drug-enforcement policies in the 1980s that punish all offenses severely, no matter how minor the violation of the school rule (Ayers, Dohrn, & Ayers, 2001; Giroux, 2003; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Some of this research has found that race is a mechanism that differentially affects the schooling experiences of students based on preconceived notions and attitudes about the academic abilities of students from non-dominant ethnic backgrounds (Ferguson, 2001; Fine, 1995; Lewis, 2003). For example, in Ferguson’s (2001) book, Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of a Black Masculinity, she explores the effects of the gender and racial stereotyping of African American boys on their school experiences. After three years of participant-observation at an elementary school, she details how school personnel created “deviant” Black boys who then needed to be regulated. In particular, she describes how young Black boys are already understood as “jail bound.” Though there is debate about the discriminatory practices enabled by zero-tolerance policies, it is clear that school personnel have discretion in implementing these policies. For example, Rios’s (2011) research describes how youth compare encounters with police, probation, and prosecutors with interactions they had with school administrators and teachers who placed them in detention rooms and community centers as an attempt to exorcise their criminality.

Sociopolitical theory, in turn, acknowledges the historical context in which schooling takes place, and how educational institutions are shaped by current political economy and ideology. Students who are reactively constructed as a problem of the educational system via at-
risk discourses require a market-based school reform solution. Driven largely by concerns about at-risk students, crisis discourses over the problems in education focus on the inability of traditional public schools to address the two major concerns regarding students in educational policy: their academic preparation, and their well-being/safety. As a result, educational research has tended to be overly psychological in focusing on how to get students to learn more, instead of addressing the structural issues inherent in educational institutions (Apple & Weis, 1983).

Sociopolitical theory in education instead posits that schools, as ideological sites,¹ are spaces that socially oppress and exclude, and are implicated in the reproduction of capitalist imperatives and rhetoric (Anyon, 2011; Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 2011). For example, in Anyon’s (1979) study of seventeen widely-used secondary-school United States history textbooks that focus on economic and labor history from the Civil War to World War I, she finds that the content of the textbooks reflects an ideology that serves the interests of certain groups to the exclusion of others. She defines ideology as “an explanation or interpretation of social reality, which although presented as objective is demonstrably partial in that it expresses the social priorities of certain political, economic, and other groups” (p. 111). Sociopolitical perspectives acknowledge the historical context in which schooling takes place, and how educational institutions are shaped by current political economy and ideology.

I utilize this sociopolitical understanding of the relationship between schooling and ideology to create a framework (discussed in Section Three) that allows me to explore the role of a for-profit hybrid alternative program and school of choice. Within the market-based school reform landscape, traditional public schools are believed to be highly bureaucratic and inflexible,

¹ I define ideology as the dominant discourse and hegemonic commonsense that results from neoliberal prerogatives in education (Weis, McCarthy, & Dimitriadis, 2013).
and as a result, are viewed as unable to buttress students in a way that alternative programs and schools of choice are positioned as being able to be of support (Vergari, 2007). Thus, market-based school reform is positioned as reshaping schooling structures via alternative programs and schools of choice. This is done without acknowledgment of the historical context in which schooling takes place or how educational institutions are shaped by current political economy and ideology.

Section Two: Organizational Behavior Theory

Proactive and reactive approaches to organizational behavior are described in the organizational theory literature. Proactive approaches to organizational behavior have been described in the literature as identifying opportunities to improve things, challenging the status quo, and creating favorable conditions in organizations (Crant, 2000). Reactive stances are passive or involve behavior that does not lead to organizational effectiveness, i.e., achieving the outcomes the organization intends to produce (Etzioni, 1987; Greenberg, 2013). In addition, organizational theory in community-based organization development points to the need for partnerships with community stakeholders in more proactive stances to challenges (Dahlander & Piezunka, 2014; Slavin & Morrison, 2013; Weil, Reisch, & Ohmer, 2012).

Community-school partnerships represent proactive approaches to educational challenges. The education literature has addressed, and continues to address, challenges and opportunities as they affect students in schools. Much of the school-community partnership literature, for instance, focuses on building preventative and long-term solutions to both the well-being and academic preparation of students in communities of color. These initiatives may start from a community-cultural-wealth perspective (Yosso, 2005) or a funds-of-knowledge perspective (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2006) that acknowledges the potential and unique
contributions students bring to schools and classrooms, rather than positioning them as problems. These perspectives seek to work with both families and communities.

A different response to students and communities’ needs are reactive approaches to educational challenges meant to individually “treat” the student without acknowledgment of the context or long-term effects. These reactive practices have also been identified in the education literature as the school-to-prison pipeline (Nelson, Jolivette, Leone, & Mathur, 2010), teaching to the test (Meken, 2006), and scripted curriculums (Bracey, 2009; Milner, 2013; Nagel, 1995). Teaching to the test is a result of high-stakes testing meant to hold educators accountable for test scores. This policy-led theory of action suggests that holding teachers accountable will increase these students’ access to a high-quality, standards-based general education curriculum. Instead, this has resulted in highly standardized curriculum meant to ensure students performed well on these tests (Meken, 2006).

Organizational behavior theory provides a reactive versus proactive approach on the role of educational challenges and opportunities. I leverage this theory to understand how students and traditional public schools view the problem, suggesting a reactive approach that consequently frames alternative programs and schools of choice, such as charters, as solutions. Distinguishing between a proactive and reactive institutional stance in relation to ensuring the well-being and college preparation of low-income youth of color in schools allows me to understand the institutional response to the problems associated with students (i.e., what makes them at risk).

Section Three: Reactive versus Proactive Approaches Framework

Bringing together social theory on the education of low-income youth of color and institutional (organizational) theory provides a way to think about these youth, their
communities, and the institutions’ approaches or responses to them by putting the two literatures in conversation with one another. In bridging these two literatures, I am able to view the role of Westgate Charter High (WGCH), a conversion school (from public), and At-Promise Academy (APA), a for-profit alternative program, from the perspective of a business organization operating under current market-based school reform priorities. This allows me to examine how these settings structure academic preparedness and safety as part of their relationship with students as clients. In particular, I focus on how safety practices and a college-going culture are structured for the students, using the concept of proactive and reactive approaches to frame my research questions. Because organizational theory posits that meeting the needs of clients can be proactive and/or reactive, a market-based approach to school reform represents a way to examine how new products and services, or processes and methods, are reactive or proactive in relation to students and communities’ needs.

**Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I present my conceptual framework for the dissertation. In Section One, I discuss my decision to borrow from sociopolitical theory to frame an understanding of students and traditional public schools, often positioned as a problem in market-based school reform policy. In Section Two, I present and discuss organization behavior theory. The notion of proactive versus reactive stances to challenges and opportunities in institutional theory allows me to examine the institutional response of WGCH and APA, my research site. In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I elaborate on my choice of methodology (Section One), site selection (Section Two), and data collection (Section Three). I detail my research questions and discuss my researcher positionality. Finally, in Section Four, I provide information on data management procedures and analysis.
Chapter 2

The setting of this dissertation is a hybrid alternative program within a brick-and-mortar charter school in California. I use the pseudonyms “At-Promise Academy” (APA) and “Westgate Charter High” (WGCH) throughout my dissertation to refer to my research site. I also use pseudonyms for all participants, schools, and programs mentioned in this study. My “field” consisted of APA and WGCH Small Learning Community 1. In this chapter, I explain the design of the study and the reasoning behind the selection of the specific methods I used. Relevant literature, research questions, and conceptual framework of the study guided my decisions about the design and methods (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I begin this chapter by explaining the research design, followed by an explanation of my positionality as a researcher in order to explain how and why I chose specific methods and methodology for this study. I then outline the goal of the research project. I also detail why I selected the site and the data I collected and describe the measures taken to ensure data trustworthiness. Finally, in the data collection and analysis sections, I explain the sources of the data that I used to answer my research questions, as well as how the data was organized for interpretation.

Section One: Methodology

I approach this study through the lens of critical ethnography. I use the qualifier “critical” to differentiate this study from descriptive or interpretative approaches that adopt a more detached, objective, value-free orientation to knowledge (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2007). Through critical ethnographic research, I am able to gain awareness and understanding of a particular culture-sharing group by considering the sociohistorical contexts and examining how knowledge is shaped by values, ideologies, and power differences (Anderson, 1989; Brewer, 2000; Canagarajah, 1993; Creswell, 2009; Cumming et al., 1994).
Critical ethnography aligns with postcolonial philosophical traditions. It situates the research in a context to consider how knowledge is shaped by the values of human agents and communities, and considers the implications of power differences (Cumming et al., 1994). In this manner, rather than ignoring my role as researcher and striving to maintain objectivity, I considered my role as a researcher.

My specific conceptual framework is influenced by sociopolitical and organizational theories, concepts, and research. Like all research, ethnography is shaped by the researcher’s values and preferences, and in that, a researcher holds power in how they represent the objects of their study. The purpose of critical ethnography is to offer something valuable to society in terms of understanding different cultures; in educational research, these types of ethnographies often aim to democratize educational relationships and institutions by contextualizing schooling experiences and the pursuit of social justice. For example, scholars have reappropriated understandings of students from “drop outs” to “push outs” (Fine, 1991) by contextualizing the experiences of youth of color in U.S. schools who have been historically denied equitable access to learning. Whereas the term “drop outs” places blame on individual students for not continuing their formal schooling, the term “push outs” calls into question the institutional and structural forces that allow for students to stop attending school. Other exemplary works within this research approach include Valenzuela’s (1999) “Subtractive Schooling” and Willis’s (1981) “Learning to Labor.” “Subtractive schooling” refers to the idea that rather than adding to student’s cultural practices and language(s), schools aim to strip these assets from students, and instead, to standardize their education and make English the only valid language. Like Fine, such a critical analysis decenters the individual as deficit or lacking, and centers the institutional and power relations as the most salient to individuals’ educational choices. Similarly, Willis
questions the ideological and reproductive qualities of schools in educating working-class youth for working-class jobs in his yearlong critical ethnography of a British school. In all, critical research questions the structure and ideology of schools as places that privilege White, heteronormative, middle-class values.

**Project Goals and Research Questions**

Market-based school reform incentivizes schools to invest in the academic preparation and well-being of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, 2010; California Department of Education, 2011). These imperatives, often articulated as the safety and college preparation of students, are currently seen as a problem that traditional public schools have been unable to address. In turn, alternative programs and schools of choice are seen as viable solutions. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the role of a charter school that houses a for-profit hybrid alternative program, given historical and national policy contexts. In particular, I focus on priorities that have been restated in various California state policies that highlight making students “college-ready” and creating environments to develop “safe and healthy” students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, 2010; California Department of Education, 2011). To this aim, I ask:

1. How do school personnel structure order at WGCH?
2. How does the structuring of order address students’ senses of safety?
3. How does WGCH structure a college-going culture?
4. How is APA a part of the structuring of a college-going culture at WGCH, if at all?

Through these questions, I sought to understand how this new schooling site responds to the needs of its students and community (i.e., a reactive or proactive institutional approach), and to what extent this reflects a marked departure from traditional schooling methods and processes.
Researcher Positionality

As a woman of color in academia, I resist and participate in the colonizing of knowledge (Villenas, 1996). I see my own acts of studying and representing non-dominant people through research as acts of colonizing knowledge, as the representation of others’ experiences holds a great deal of power (Madison, 2011; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Research is a political project, and I believe it should be conducted in an effort to overcome current sociopolitical oppression, rather than to inform oppression. As a graduate student given institutional access to the site by school administrators, I was allowed into the research site to conduct my observations. Although I needed individual consent or assent for individual interviews, I could take observational notes of the participants while at the research site. These research methods granted me the power to represent people and situations and, in a sense, act as a colonizer of the participants’ meaning-making and their knowledge. On the other hand, my self-identification as a Latina from a working-class background who grew up near the ethnographic site allowed me to quickly build rapport with both the school personnel and students. Students often saw me as someone “like them,” and as someone familiar, because I knew the neighborhood very well. School personnel often portrayed me as someone who “got it,” and as someone for the students to look up to as an example. Despite my rapport with school personnel who first granted me access to the school, I remained an outsider to all research participants (Baca Zinn, 1979). Over time at my research site, I may have gained insider status with different participants at different times, but this rapport by no means removed the power dynamics at play, nor my positionality as a researcher. In the trustworthiness section, I further discuss how generating multiple data
sources and methods allowed me to analyze data in a way that reflects what participants described to me (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Peshkin, 1988).

I am a professional counselor who has worked with youth of color through college outreach efforts in urban high schools for over 10 years. Through this experience, I have worked closely with diverse student populations. Although my job has been to inspire and inform students of the possibility of college and financial aid, I am familiar with the varying challenges that students and schools face in meeting these needs and goals. In the early years of my doctoral program, I immersed myself in qualitative research for my first- and second-year required projects. These projects influenced my decision to continue my methodological training in qualitative methods, often taking advanced courses outside my department and across specializations in my own program. These three years of training prepared and guided my decision to conduct critical ethnography for my dissertation study. During the first years of my doctoral program, I also began to question deficit theories in education that informed research questions and I immersed myself in theory and literature with a critical lens that focused on the aim of democratizing educational practices by better understanding the role of current ideologies in deterring this goal.

**Section Two: Site Selection**

**Westgate Charter High**

I purposefully sampled a California for-profit alternative program housed within a brick-and-mortar charter school in order to understand how these schooling structures respond to national priorities to create both safe schools and college-ready students. As I discuss in Chapter 3, California has seen an increase in the number of charter schools where low-income youth of color are concentrated. These growing numbers of charter schools include online or physical
settings, both with or without teacher support, in either a virtual or a physical space (Huerta, d’Entremont, & Gonzalez, 2009). I define my research site as a hybrid program because it offers a curriculum online within a brick-and-mortar school setting and with accompanying teacher support. Taking courses online through this program is intended to allow students to complete mandatory graduation unit courses in a few short months. I therefore chose Westgate Charter High and its At-Promise Academy’s for-profit hybrid alternative program because it serves low-income youth of color who are otherwise academically and socially vulnerable to not being supported in becoming “college- and career-ready” students.

Before becoming Westgate Charter High, the charter organization described the pre-existing school as one of the most “persistently low-achieving schools” in California. In turn, the current mission of Westgate Charter is described as one that will transform education so that “every student can graduate prepared for college.” The school was converted to a district-independent charter school in 2008, and its total enrollment is about 800 students. At least 90 percent of the students are low-income, 70 percent are Latino, and 30 percent are African American. Similarly, the for-profit hybrid alternative program within the charter school reflects that population (see Table 1).

Table 1

| State, District, School, and Program Demographic Information in Percentages |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                             | District California Westgate Charter At-Promise Program |
| Latina/o                   | 53.7 52 70 59       |
| Black or African American  | 15.7 6.5 30 41     |
| Low-Income                 | 69.9 57.5 90 95    |

*Note:* Low-income percentages calculated from free/reduced lunch data retrieved from the California Department of Education Web site.
Westgate Charter High is separated into four different small learning communities (SLC), referred to as 1, 2, 3, and 4. Westgate Charter uses a small-schools model, where each school has its own administrative team (i.e., principal, vice principal, counselors, etc.), but all schools report student academic achievement and API scores as one larger school. All schools are located within the larger pre-existing school buildings, but they are separated by fences and gates. The hybrid program, or APA, falls under the auspices of WGCH SLC 1 and is located right across the front office of WGCH SLC 1, hereafter referred to as WGCH. There is only one hybrid program within the charter organization (see Figure 2.1).

![Figure 2.1. Organizational Representation of Westgate Charter High](image)

The dashed line in Figure 2.1 shows where the hybrid alternative program (At-Promise Academy) is physically located. The dotted lines show that the academy is part of a larger for-profit corporation that operates independently while also maintaining a financial relationship with the charter management organization. The charter organization pays the corporation using the state funding it receives based on students’ average daily attendance (ADA).

**At-Promise Academy**
Although the APA hybrid alternative program is located within Charter 1, and physically separated from the small learning communities of Charters 2, 3, and 4, the program is made up of students from all of the small learning communities. The vast majority of my participant-observations occurred in the APA hybrid alternative program. APA operates independently. It is described online by the parent company as a cost-effective “blended learning program that educates and graduates at-risk and disengaged students” (citations removed to retain confidentiality). APA currently operates in five different states, including California, Alaska, Michigan, Maryland and the District of Columbia. They describe the current national dropout rates and position their programs as a response to these high dropout percentages. Online, it states that their classrooms “utilize the best of 21st century teaching and learning experiences—with the resources, skills, and real-time data and analytics to immediately see the impact of instructional choices” (citations removed to retain confidentiality).

APA has the capacity to hold 75 students at a time, and during the 2013-2014 academic year, they held two sessions, one in the morning from 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., and one in the afternoon from 12:30-5:30 p.m. Students either attend the morning session or afternoon session, based on preference and/or space. Although students were from all the SLCs, students were not allowed to enroll concurrently in the SLC and the hybrid alternative program, but they could enroll back once they were up-to-date on credits. This limited them from being involved in extracurricular school programming, for instance, clubs and proms. Some students took other classes for the remainder of the school day at other community schools or programs. In the physical learning environment, students sit in assigned seats at individual desks built with high sides that visually isolate the student from their surroundings, which are also known as carrels. Students face the computers in their carrels with a personal file folder they pick up upon arrival.
that contains their current class information. They work on prepackaged software curricula on their computers and have the support of four teachers in the room if they need help with a lesson.

When students walk in, they check in using a timestamp clock on the right-hand wall (see location A in Figure 2.2). To the left of the entrance sits the office manager behind a desk that has a three-foot tall counter (B in Figure 2.2). The room itself is an open space of about 1,000 square feet, not including the three rooms on the left wall. Pale green paint covers the main open space. The rooms on the left wall are the break room, workshop/classroom, and supply room, respectively, from the back wall to the front of the room. There are two rows of desks that face each other in the middle of the carpeted floor. The rows run facing each other with the students’ backs against the walls. The rest of the students sit in carrels facing the back, front, and right-side wall of the room. Between the office manager’s desk and the middle two rows of desks is a kidney shaped table that sits about six people. To the left of this table is a desk designated for a teacher. Each teacher has a similar set up in each corner of the room (four in total).
In this section, I provide an overview of the participants in this study and outline the data collected over the course of one academic year (September 2013-June 2014). The data includes: (1) fieldnotes of participants and activities in both formal settings (e.g., classrooms, faculty meetings, community meetings, etc.) and informal settings (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, gatherings, etc.) within the school and community; (2) in-depth interviews with 19 students and 12 school personnel and administrators; and (3) two focus group interviews with six students each (n=12).

**Participants.** Participants for the study include school personnel (i.e., teachers, office manager, etc.) and students enrolled in APA and WGCH more generally. Table 2 provides an overview of the participants by data source.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants by Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 2.2. At-Promise Academy Site: Physical Space Description Map**

---
Observations | (Charter 1) | (At-Promise Academy) | (Charter 1) | (At-Promise Academy) |
---|---|---|---|---|
18 | 8 | 25 | 50 |
Interviews | 8 | 4 | - | 19 |
Focus Group 1 | - | - | - | 6 |
Focus Group 2 | - | - | - | 6 |

**Participant-Observations.** I observed 68 days of the academic year with fieldnotes varying in length from one to five single-spaced documents. I typically spent two to six hours per day and began with a high frequency of visits (i.e., four to five days per week), which decreased over time as I became increasingly familiar with the participants’ perspectives, routines, and practices in the program. I wrote electronic fieldnotes for each day I conducted observation at the school site, which either were written immediately following observations or were transcribed from audio recordings made immediately afterward. At the site, I wrote a condensed list of notes, known as jottings, using pen or pencil and paper (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I used these jottings to elaborate on my fieldnotes later that day or by the end of the week. By the end of each week, I had transcribed all audio-recorded observations into electronic fieldnotes.

*School personnel.* In WGCH, I observed school personnel, which included office assistants, vice principals, the dean, community resource officer, and probation officer. In total, this resulted in 18 total participants (see Table 3 below). Of these fifteen, eight were interviewed; they are detailed under the “Interviews” section below. The additional participants were all personnel observed in the hybrid alternative academy: four teachers, an instructional support assistant, an office assistant, and a counselor.

*Students.* I observed 25 students enrolled in Westgate Charter 1. Charter 1 students were primarily those I observed while shadowing or observing school personnel in the front office or as they interacted with hybrid alternative program students. Although I saw many students in the
passing periods and both before and after school, my observations and electronic fieldnotes focused on about 25 students from Charter 1.

In the hybrid alternative academy (APA), there was a total of 175 registered students, but only about 100 students attended at any given time, and of those, about 50 regularly attended. In all, I observed about 100 different students, but my fieldnotes primarily reflect the 50 students who attended regularly, and with whom I was able to interact.

**Interviews.** All interviews took place in the workshop room or break room. These rooms were usually not used, and they could be locked for privacy. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

**School personnel.** I interviewed four of eight school personnel who were regularly observed in the hybrid alternative program. These included the teachers—Ms. Adisa, Ms. Florence, Ms. Jennie—and the office assistant, Yesenia. In addition to these hybrid alternative program school personnel, I also interviewed eight school personnel from WGCH, including two teachers, an office assistant, a community resource officer, a probation officer, a dean, a vice principal, and the President and Chief Academic Officer of the charter management organization.

Table 3

*Pseudonyms and Responsibilities of School Personnel Observed and/or Interviewed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charter Management Organization</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeannine</td>
<td>Chief Academic Officer</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Westgate Charter</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudio</td>
<td>Community Resource Officer</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>English Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students. I interviewed 19 students out of the 50 students that I regularly observed; all were from within the hybrid alternative program. Since students did not attend regularly, it was challenging to build rapport, give students a consent form for parent signature (or the Information Sheet for those who were over 18 years of age), and receive it back without it getting misplaced or forgotten a few times. The Consent and Study Information forms (see Appendix I and II) explained that the interview would take 45-60 minutes to complete, that they would receive $15 for their participation, and that it would be audio-recorded. In general, interviews took about an hour. In all, I interviewed nine male-identified students and ten female-identified students. Five of the nine male students are Black and four are Latino. Two of the female students are Black and eight are Latina. I selected a cross-section of those students who regularly attended or were receptive to my request for an interview.
During the interview, students filled out a Demographic Face Sheet (Appendix III) and answered a total of 21 questions. The student interview protocol is also provided in Appendix IV. Questions during the interview were divided into four sections; (1) background, (2) perspectives on formal schooling/education, (3) perspectives on terms used for understanding their schooling experiences and the managing of resources, and (4) perspectives on the managing of resources and students. In the “Background” section, I focused on understanding what led students to the current program they were attending, including whether family members also attended the school/program; whether they knew of the charter conversion; or how they learned of it. The next set of interview questions focused on their individual goals and how these were being supported (or not) and what their experiences with school personnel have been, including any experiences with police or community resource officers in school. In the third section of the interview, I focused on what it meant for students to do well in school and what sort of feedback and experiences they drew from these conclusions. For the fourth and final section of the interview, they shared further thoughts or experiences they had on being students in this setting.

Focus groups. Two student focus groups were conducted (See Table 4 for student pseudonyms and participation). Focus group interactions were useful in allowing students to form a collective understanding of community and to discuss their future goals further by engaging with one another through their own questions, frames, and concepts. Focus group work also allows exchanges in anecdotes and debates or comments on each other’s experiences and points of view (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Politically speaking, conducting focus group research allows the possibility of the researcher-researched relationship to shift the balance of power in favor of participants (Wilkinson, 1999). The focus groups were comprised of students who were previously interviewed one-on-one but had not yet turned 18 years of age. These focus
group interviews took place in the workshop room in the alternative program and began with a short college and career knowledge survey. During the interview, I asked students about their thoughts on what/who they considered their community, what goals and plans they had, and how these were being supported (or not) in their current school setting. In all, there were eight focus group questions and six survey questions, as shown in Appendix V. Each focus group took an hour and the interview was transcribed for content and thematic analysis. More on why focus group interviews were included as a data method is described in detail in the Data Analysis section below.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hybrid Alternative Program</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Focus Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(At-Promise Academy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrique</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paco</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beto</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayra</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reyna</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nessa</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marbel</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwen</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trustworthiness

I used two forms of triangulation recognized in qualitative research studies as increasing the trustworthiness of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, 2001). First, I used multiple data source triangulation. I interviewed individuals with different roles in the school, including school personnel and students. I also interviewed these individuals over time. Second, I used multiple methods triangulation in the analyses of fieldnotes, individual interviews, documents and online content, and focus group interviews. Triangulation of the multiple data sources (i.e., students and school personnel) and methods (i.e., participant-observation, interviews, focus groups) increase the trustworthiness of research studies by showing that findings emerge from participant responses, and not the choice of the data source or method (Denzin, 2009). The methodological goal of this study is to represent the perceptions of students and school personnel. It is not the purpose of the study to generalize or represent how all individuals create understanding across schools, but to understand how meaning-making unfolds by participants at WGCH, and more specifically, in communities similar to the APA hybrid alternative program.

Below, I describe the limitations of the dissertation, but I first describe strategies employed for further advancing the quality and rigor of this dissertation study. My strategy to guarantee the trustworthiness of this study took place in three ways: (a) reflexivity, (b) credibility, and (c) transferability.

Reflexivity. As a critical ethnographer, I must “live inside the cultural and discursive positionalities” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 299) that inform the claims made by my participants. To that aim, I sought to understand the lived experiences of participants in the study. I validated participants’ ways of knowing by acknowledging myself to be a part of their
culture. For instance, when a student described another student or school personnel, I conferred with the respective participant to understand the meaning or reasoning. In addition, when it was inappropriate to ask a particular student what they meant, I conferred at a later time with other students with whom I had already created rapport to understand what certain terms meant more generally. This allowed me to build rapport with newer students quickly by not needing to ask questions constantly while still learning the cultural and discursive culture at the school. With school personnel, particularly those within APA, I was able to understand how their interactions with one another and other students changed and fluctuated.

My bias as a researcher was held accountable in several ways: (a) by being aware of my own personal and professional investment in communities of color and how these shape my research prerogatives, (b) realizing during analysis how my research questions shaped interviews, and finally (c) my choice to be a “known investigator” (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). I sought to be reflective of these various roles by memoing. For instance, in a memo log, I wrote, “I’m also very comfortable with the students and wish I could just provide rides or help in non-school issues. I know this will probably limit the trust from school personnel and there are implications for IRB so I don’t offer this type of help” (Fieldnotes, December 4, 2014). In trying to understand the policy context that the school personnel and students navigated, it was difficult at times to build rapport simultaneously with these participants. Other memos attest to this difficulty and my decision to focus “body work” or spatial positioning and negotiation of the body in the field (Coffey, 1999) to favor students. I discuss this further in the limitations section.

Credibility. Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and ongoing member-checking were achieved in my role as participant-observer, which is a methodological strength of ethnography. Over the academic year I spent in the school and program, I developed
relationships with key informants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and often participated in meetings, along with informal events with school staff. I was privy to upcoming events and updated on occurrences in the program by students and school personnel when I was not present. These included both unexpected situations that arose as well as any other changes in the day-to-day routine within the program or school. Saturation of the observation data occurred at 21 weeks at the field site. This was when no new themes emerged in my weekly memos of the observation data and when I started hearing the same comments from different participants in the field (Bowen, 2008).

Credibility provides confidence in the verification of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is achieved through many processes including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000). After I collected student and school personnel interview data, I confirmed the conclusions I was making through ongoing analysis and the sharing of the data with two students and two school personnel participants throughout the data-collection phase. I asked for feedback and clarification, and often integrated the feedback into future interviews and interpretations of the data. In particular, I used student interviews to structure questions I asked in the two student focus group interviews and to prioritize observations made in the later stages of data collection. All of these strategies provide credibility of the findings through triangulation and member-checking.

Transferability. Transferability shows that findings have applicability in other contexts and can be achieved through thick description and purposive sampling (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was able to provide thick description due to prolonged engagement at the site and by triangulating data sources and methods. I collected
information-rich cases to conduct an in-depth study through focus group and individual interviews. In addition, I purposefully sampled APA as the research site because it allowed me to gain in-depth understanding of how meaning-making unfolds, specifically in hybrid alternative programs in low-income communities of color. This allowed me to apply the knowledge I acquired in other similar contexts.

**Limitations**

Quality and rigor in qualitative data are established by trustworthiness criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within each of these are specific ways of increasing verification, but at least two criteria must be met to meet trustworthiness (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Creswell, 2009). In comparing and combining different data sources at the research site and maintaining reflexivity in the field, I was able to develop a rich and thick analysis and triangulation of the data to increase the verification of the research study. Still, all studies have their limits. Qualitative research is designed to provide a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon, making the results difficult to generalize, but notable in addressing and understanding complexity (Peshkin, 1988; Yin, 2003).

As I mentioned previously, my choices as a researcher are shaped by what I am willing and able to attend to in the field (Peshkin, 1988). My personal and professional commitment to communities of color, and the scope of the research questions, including methodology, shaped my research prerogatives. For example, the term “at risk” did not resonate with the participants. During data analysis, the concept of community became a salient theme. It was necessary to tease out this definition further, so I conducted focus groups toward that aim. This later informed the notion of (or lack of) safety in the first research question. In the field, I also made the choice
to position myself spatially in the field in two fundamental ways. First, due to the transient nature of the students, I opted to spend more time in the students’ spaces to build emotional entrée and rapport. Second, due to unaccounted for gender dynamics, I had to navigate unwanted sexual attention carefully by three male participants without losing rapport.

Section Four: Data Organization and Analysis

In this last section, I explain the stages of analysis per method used. The various stages of analysis, or how a researcher makes sense of the data—from collection to data interpretation—require purposeful structuring and ordering of the data. All interviews were audio-recorded by me at the time they took place and were then sent to a transcribing service for analysis at the conclusion of the data-collection phase. Throughout the data-collection phase, the data was analyzed by developing themes and analytical questions that resulted in thematic narratives and codes (Creswell, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2001; Wolcott, 2002). This was accomplished by using a reflexive model of science that centers the intersubjectivity of the social scientist and subject of study, and values intervention, process, structuration, and theory reconstruction (Burawoy, 1998).

Observation Fieldnotes Stages of Analyses. After each week at the site, after electronically writing that week’s fieldnotes, I organized them into 27 weeks to coincide with the span of time I was at the site. Weeks 5, 6, 18, 24, 26, and 27 are missing fieldnotes due to Holidays, spring break (two weeks) and other school calendar related breaks. I then analyzed each week’s fieldnotes and created weekly analytic memos. In each, I referenced the date(s) and text lines from the fieldnote document (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Analytic memos helped to orient me analytically to the larger concepts that emerged from my fieldnotes and in relation to the research questions. By the end of the data-collection period, I had written 27 analytical
memos, one for each week. These memos include the methodological decisions I made while collecting data, such as observations during interviews that helped shape the structure of future interviews, and my observations. Memos also include theoretical reflections, such as how my emerging data lent itself to explaining the theory or literature I was employing. In addition, I analyzed the content in my observations at the subject level and created typologies (Berg, 2001). Typologies are conceptual categories or themes that serve to develop codes in later iterations of the data. These typologies were created from terms, behaviors, or ideas used by the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) or categorically compiled according to an existing theoretical framework. For example, I created a memo about the various types and amounts of “surveillance” I witnessed on the field, and in this memo, I describe how surveillance practices may relate to organizational theory.

The analytical memos of the fieldnotes serve as the first iteration of analysis of the observational data (see Appendix VIX). These typologies are loosely arranged thematically, but no overarching category was developed at this stage of the analysis. Over time in the field, however, with saturation, I began to group some participant patterns (terms, behavior, and ideas) into categories. These patterns were the starting point for the second iteration of the data analysis. In the second stage of observation data analysis, I read through all 27 analytic memos, and then cross-referenced observation data and explicitly elaborated on or combined patterns into categories based on previously generated typologies found in the memos. I created categories based on cross-referenced observation data in the memos and the existing theoretical framework. I was able to identify patterns across time and data sources more clearly at this stage of the analysis due to access to all memos after the completion of the data collection. These are shown on Appendix VIX under the “Second Iteration” section. Themes were specified by a categorical
value assigned to each pattern of data. In the third stage of data analysis of the observation data, I
created codes from the themes by comparing and contrasting similar categories and expanding
on themes to create thematic networks. I listed these in alphabetical order, defined each code,
and provided descriptions of the code. In this stage, some themes became main group or
subgroup themes of previous themes. This ordering of themes allowed me to make meaning or
find significance in the topic-level data.

Table 5

Appendix VIX: Last Iteration of Analysis of Observational Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth Iteration: Concept Mapping for Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Using coded themes of observation data)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ#1: “Safety”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Neighborhood Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Neighborhood Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing Program Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Personal Backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Socializing/Distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ#2: “College-for-all”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Program Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-wide events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Personal Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the final iteration, codes were mapped onto the research questions (Anfara, Brown, &
Mangione, 2002), as shown under the “Fourth Iteration” in Appendix VIX and in Table 5 above.

For this stage of the observation data analysis, I mapped the codes to my research questions
based on the theoretical interests guiding the research question and the salient issues that arose
from the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). During this final strategy, I omitted codes that described
my experiences as a researcher in the field. Some codes were also under more than one research
question, and to be clear, while it is presented here as a very linear process, I explored codes across the research questions to provide contextual answers.

**Student Interview Stages of Analyses.** Student interviews were examined using phenomenological and narrative strategies of data analysis (Creswell, 2003; Madison, 2005). Phenomenological analyses of data focus on presenting what happened (textural description) and how the participants experienced the phenomenon (structural description). Conversely, narrative strategies describe experiences in chronological order. Both of these strategies’ aim is to present the significant and unique aspects of lived experiences as well as the general aspects and connections across interviews. Examining the individual interviews using this analytic strategy resulted in academic life stories that began with the previous schools students attended and ended with what led a particular student to enroll in the hybrid alternative program, a description of their experiences in the current program, and a discussion of their future goals, along with how they felt or processed these experiences.

I wrote analytic memos after each student interview that were analyzed throughout the data-collection period, which allowed me to develop ongoing themes regarding the contexts of students’ lives that were not necessarily told as part of the plot of their academic trajectories or how they experienced them (i.e., not textural or structural). Usually, these contextual themes were similar across participants and became one of my questions after they emerged from the data. These included stories of the conversion period of the school, identifying what “community” meant to them, what it meant to do well in school, what their experiences with school personnel were like, and what they understood their current student status to be. These analytic memos across student interviews also helped me gain insight into developing
methodological strategies in structuring interview questions to compare across participants post data collection.

School Personnel Interview Stages of Analyses. School personnel interview data was collected over the academic year I observed at the school site. Interviews of program staff took place in the workshop or break room when it was not in use by other program staff. Interviews with school personnel from WGCH took place in private rooms. The Consent Information form (Appendix VI) explained that the interview would take 45-60 minutes to complete and that it would be audio-recorded along with other standard information. See Table 6 for demographic information of the school personnel interviewees.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Personnel Demographic Information</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Other School Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter Management Organization</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGCH Charter 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Alternative Program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interview, school personnel filled out a Demographic Fact Sheet (Appendix VII) and answered a total of 18 questions. The school personnel interview protocol is shown in Appendix VIII. Questions during the interview were divided into four sections: (1) background, (2) perspectives on formal schooling/education, (3) perspectives on terms used for understanding their schooling experiences and the management of resources, and (4) perspectives on the management of resources and students. In the “Background” section of the interview, I focused on having the interviewees describe their duties and responsibilities at the school. I then asked them about their own opinions and understanding of the purpose of schooling for the second
section of questions. The last two sections focused on how students and resources were understood from their current position.

School personnel interviews were analyzed by identifying meaningful and relevant passages of data while finding patterns within the data in order to merge into themes and become categories for analysis (Bowen, 2009). What was considered meaningful and relevant was based on observation data that had been cross-referenced and compared against interview memos. This yielded the coding scheme shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7

School Personnel Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Scheme with Definitions and Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs about the Community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime school personnel expressed opinions regarding students and their families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thoughts on demographic of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Whether they believe parents are involved or not in the lives of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curricular Practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal and informal school-wide curricular norms or rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional development Fridays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food distribution for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Juvenile Justice System Reference</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime school personnel reference the juvenile justice system whether in relation to a student or to describe an aspect of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The main quad, referred to as “the yard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most wanting students rather than those students with high needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nontraditional Schooling Options</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime other local nontraditional schooling options are mentioned as alternatives for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local community programs for pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre/Post-school Policies and Practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime any policy or practice is juxtaposed or compared pre- and post-conversion of the school from public to charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How the conversion affected resources like social support/psychologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ESL designation practices pre-/post-conversion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Purpose of Education
How the purpose of education in the United States is understood
- Socioeconomic equalizer
- Personal growth

### Safety
Anytime school personnel reference their own sense of safety or students’ safety
- Not feeling safe in the neighborhood
- Thinking students are safer in school

### School Climate
Beliefs about the working environment mentioned by school personnel
- College-going campus
- Teaching is too standardized

### School Resources
Anytime school personnel mention any school resource available for students
- Childcare center
- Social Workers

### School Discipline
When school personnel reference any school disciplinary practice, whether formal or informal
- Behavior pyramid of interventions
- Calls home when students are not in uniform

---

**Student Focus Group 1 and 2 Stages of Analyses.** Student focus group interviews and surveys were analyzed to create new concepts of the data or relate to central themes gathered from observational data. Aside from triangulating the data, focus group interviews broadened concepts of codes and deepened student views. These new concepts and views were used to create a set of analytic questions to help answer the research questions (see Table 8 below). I wrote an analytic memo after each student focus group interview, which was analyzed and compared with student post-interview memos.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New/Deeper Concept</th>
<th>Analytic Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

37
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community/Neighborhood</th>
<th>How does a safe environment also restrict?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Software as Teachers</td>
<td>How is standardized curriculum on software innovative teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusing Processes</td>
<td>How does a college-for-all curriculum affect those not college-bound?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>What ways are students’ goals supported?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>What is the role of labeling students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Goals</td>
<td>What is the mission of the institutions involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Where is the onus of enrollment placed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/Encouragement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission mismatch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conducting two separate focus group interviews allowed me to see student-interaction dynamics and compare responses in student interviews since some students were previously interviewed one-on-one. In addition, through the post-focus group interview survey, I was able to assess individual college knowledge. I analyzed survey data by examining if students noticed a difference between UC vs. CSU requirements, acceptance vs. enrollment procedures of the type of higher education institutions, knowledge of financial aid, and applying for jobs.

**Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I present my choice of methodology, site selection, and data-collection procedures. I also discuss the organization of the data and analysis. In all, I provide reasoning for the methodology and consider limitations. In the next chapter, I present the unique case of California’s for-profit alternative programs (Section One). Next, I briefly discuss national policy that outlines the lack of academic preparation and well-being for youth as the problems that market-based school reform is meant to solve (Section Two).
Chapter 3

In this chapter, I provide a historical analysis of California’s growing market-based school reform and the current national policy context. First, I present the unique case of California’s for-profit alternative programs (Section One). Next, I briefly discuss the national policy that outlines the lack of academic preparation and well-being of youth as “the problem” that market-based school reform is meant to solve (Section Two). I leverage a proactive versus reactive conceptual framework to understand the relationship between institutional responses and the needs of students and community. Sociopolitical theory allows me to frame how low-income youth of color and traditional public schools are understood as problems in market-based school reform policy. Organization behavior theory gives me a way to frame institutional responses to students within their communities. In totality, the conceptual framework allows me to explore how a for-profit alternative program housed within a charter school is reacting institutionally to low-income youth of color and their communities as a means to compare how it may or may not reflect a solution to traditional public schooling.

Section One: California’s Unique History of Market-Based Reform

California is the state with the most charter schools and charter school students in the country (California Charter Schools Association [CCSA], 2015), and it has also seen the largest growth of charter schools. California’s charter school law, known as the Charter Schools Act (CSA), was enacted in 1992, just one year after the first U.S. state law allowed the establishment of charter schools in Minnesota (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools [NAPCS], 2015). Since then, many states have adopted similar laws, including voucher programs and tuition tax credits, which contribute to a market-based school reform movement that has been steadily growing nationwide (Mora & Christianakis, 2011; Smith, 2001; Wells, 2002).
New charter schools include those resulting from public school conversion, new start-ups, and those taken over by the state (NAPCS, 2015). These three charter types can be governed in various ways. In California, as a result of CSA and Assembly Bill 544 of 1998, charter schools follow one of three types of governance: becoming a nonprofit public benefit corporation, becoming an unincorporated but governed-by school district, or becoming a for-profit institution. For-profit, or limited liability corporations (LLC), make up less than 1 percent, or six charter schools statewide (CCSA, 2015). Most California charter schools are nonprofit public benefit corporations. No matter how they are structured, all California charter schools are subject to the same state and federal regulations, and must be non-sectarian, “open to any student who wishes to attend,” and tuition-free (NAPCS, 2015), meaning state funded. According to the CCSA (2015), the following is how charter schools are funded:

In California, traditional district school and charter public schools are funded under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) that allocates state and local tax dollars to public education agencies based on the number of pupils in each grade level. Additional funding is provided for students with high needs, such as low-income pupils and English Learners. Public funding generally follows the student to the public school the parents choose, whether a charter school or a traditional district school. (par. 13)

Being tuition-free does not mean charters are exclusively not-for-profit, as no current law prohibits charter schools from partnering with for-profit corporations. In fact, much of the impetus and rhetoric for these organizations encourages these types of partnerships because they are seen as being a solution to some of the educational problems that traditional public schools are not able to address (Lipman, 2013). Thus, though law prohibits charter schools from being “run” by for-profit corporations, collaborations between charter schools and for-profit corporations exist. The research site for this dissertation is one such example, i.e., an outsourced for-profit alternative program housed within a charter school.
The underlying argument for market-driven school reform is that increased freedom of school choice leads to improved academic achievement and school conditions, including overall student well-being (Boyles, 2000; Cookson, 1992), in part, because school choice is believed to increase flexibility in bureaucratic processes and spending (CCSA, 2014). Additionally, proponents of a market-based educational system argue that competition among schools as a result of allowing parents to freely choose between schools will increase the quality of public schools because they will be forced to compete to retain students (Friedman, 2006; Mora & Christianakis, 2011). In California, however, studies show conflicting results. For example, some studies have found that charter schools are improving student achievement scores while others have concluded that charter schools are not promoting student achievement (CREDO, 2009; Slovacek, Kunnan, & Kim, 2002; Zimmer & Buddin, 2006, 2009). One of the major claims market-based school reform makes is the potential change it brings to the U.S. educational system. Thought to be an innately different way of approaching schooling, whether alternative programs and schools of choice are living up to this remains to be seen; what is clear is that new schooling methods must also contend with national priorities to address academic achievement and safety in schools, the two most pressing issues that schools face today. Because most new charters are a result of schools in low-income communities of color “failing” (Center For Public Education [CFPE], 2010), these populations experience enhanced vulnerability to newer schooling methods that have yet to be proven effective (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, Wang, & Orfield, 2012; Zhang & Cowen, 2009).

**Alternative Programs and Schools of Choice**

The purpose of alternative schools and programs of choice is to provide different means for student academic achievement, though, in California, they are voluntary for districts,
teachers, students, and their families. The California Department of Education states the following about these programs:

These schools and programs are often characterized by responsiveness to learning and instructional style differences, and small unit size. The effective use of such instructional strategies as independent study, community-based education, focused or thematic education, and flexible scheduling increases attendance and improves performance (2016).

Positioned as responsive to the needs of students, these programs and schools are often championed as a solution to the inflexibility of traditional public school settings. By suggesting that they are flexible, these programs and schools are positioned as being potentially more successful than traditional public schools, as they are believed to be able to increase attendance and academic performance.

**For-Profit Hybrid Alternative Programs.** For-profit K-12 educational programs operating as charters boomed in the early 1990s. Since then, these programs have experienced a slow, but steady growth rate (Brady, Umstead, & Eckes, 2010; CFPE, 2010; Miron & Urshcel, 2010). California is in the top ten of over 33 states for for-profit charters (Miron, Urschel, Aguilar, & Dailey, 2012). Despite their growing popularity, few studies have examined the role for-profits play in California; and those that have, question how committed they are to English Language Learners (ELLs), as these charters have not been able to provide relevant data to national education databases (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang 2010; Mora & Chirtianakis, 2011). For example, one study found for-profit charters that serve ELLs, such as those in California, do not provide enough qualified and specialized teachers to fulfill ELL needs (Fuller, Gawlik, Gonzales, Park, & Gibbons, 2003).

Indeed, few studies have examined the unique challenges hybrid charter schools present in being held accountable to specific state legislation (Brady, Umstead, & Eckes, 2010) even
though, among home schooling and charter school movements, hybrid schooling has become the fastest growing alternative to traditional K-12 education in the United States. Although California forbids companies from operating hybrid charter schools and from profiting from state funds, as per AB 1950 of 2010 legislation, brick-and-mortar charters are not prohibited from using for-profit educational services to meet student needs, and few regulating and accountability entities govern these for-profit hybrid charters (Glass & Welner, 2011).

Hybrid charters specialize in an array of student populations—from those who prefer online learning environments to those trying to recover credits, or who want to take Advanced Placement or college-level courses (Picciano & Seaman, 2009; Gemin & Watson, 2008). Relevant to this chapter is a discussion on for-profit hybrid alternative charter schools, as they have gained popularity for being viable options for students who otherwise do not benefit from traditional school settings (Glass & Welner, 2011; Gemin & Watson, 2008). In fact, some for-profit hybrid alternative charters specifically target students who have been designated “at risk” (Picciano & Seaman, 2009; Gemin & Watson, 2008). Additionally, some for-profit hybrid alternative programs aim to assist students in “credit-recovery,” which refers to a student passing and receiving credit for a course the student had previously attempted, but had not successfully passed (Gemin & Watson, 2008).

Due to the growth of brick-and-mortar, as well as hybrid alternative high schools, a group of researchers across California is currently undertaking a longitudinal study. While they do not focus exclusively on for-profit hybrid alternative charters, they have found that continuation education programs vary dramatically in mission, design, program, philosophy, resources, and challenges (Perez & Johnson, 2008). A separate study calls attention to the initial lack of clear accountability and pedagogical structures in these programs (Huerta, Gonzalez, & d’Entremont,
Paired with other research that has found that alternative education programs also vary in their intake processes (Santikian, 2011), it is clear there is much to learn about these types of educational settings.

**Continuation Programs**

California defines “continuation education” as “a high school diploma program that meets the needs of students of ages sixteen to eighteen who have not graduated from high school, are not exempt from compulsory school attendance, and are deemed at risk of not completing their education” (California Department of Education [CDOE], 2015, par. 1). In this way, continuation schools serve a different purpose, and are not as much a part of the market-based school reform movement as alternative education programs. Continuation programs also attract students from traditional public schools who, for whatever reason, have not been able to complete their high school education in standard amount of time. Such a program might include students who have been caught up in the so-called school-to-prison pipeline, as well as students who need a flexible schedule due to employment, family obligations, or other critical needs (CDOE, 2015). In California, more than 115,000 young people, or about 10 percent of California high school students, pass through one of the state’s continuation high schools each year (De Velasco & McLaughlin, 2012).

Latino students are over-represented in continuation schools, making up a problematic 55 percent of all students in these types of programs, and although African American enrollments in continuation schools approximate those of comprehensive schools statewide, they tend to be over-represented in many districts, as well (De Velasco & McLaughlin, 2012). Such data is not surprising given that graduation rates for African American and Latino students in California are lower, at 60 percent, or about 10 percentage points below the state average (Rumberger &
Rotermund, 2009). The rapid growth of schools of choice and alternative programs in California, stemming from overall national market-based school reform, means alternative programs, including hybrid for-profits, can be expected to have an increased presence in low-income communities of color, and that they compete with traditional continuation programs for students.

**Section Two: National Policy NCLB, Blueprint, and Race to the Top as Context**

The last two national education policies governing secondary schools, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and A Blueprint for Reform (*A Blueprint*) of 2010, advance market-based school reform. First, as its main goal, NCLB sought to make all children proficient in math and reading by 2014. Hess & Petrilli (2006) cite accountability for student performance, and choice among the major changes governing the new federal law. Under NCLB, students are now tested in 3rd-8th grades. These scores are then publicly reported, broken down by class, and disaggregated by subgroups that include ethnic/racial, low-income, and limited-English proficiency status, and students with disabilities. This public reporting of student scores operates under a theory of action that seeks to make schools and teachers accountable for students’ academic achievement by publicly reporting disaggregated scores by classroom and student subgroups. NCLB was intended to mobilize stakeholders to act, and to help improve student scores via public reporting, as well as increase local control by establishing that schools and families were allowed to enact any necessary changes to affect academic achievement as determined by test scores.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the measure by which all schools and school districts are evaluated under NCLB (Hess & Petrilli, 2006, p. 33). AYP is the minimum level of improvement schools and school districts must achieve in order to avoid corrective action. AYP is based on the percentage of students who score “proficient” on the annual test, and it is based
on overall school improvement. School improvement, rather than a certain threshold all schools must meet, was one way the policy sought to prevent traditional public schools with low numbers of proficient students from being over-identified and penalized. Over the years, however, we have seen that one of the consequences of NCLB has been the over-identification and penalization of schools, particularly those in low-income communities of color (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, Wang, & Orfield, 2012; Hursh, 2007; Zhang & Cowen, 2009). For instance, NCLB introduced the following cascading school sanctions: 1) schools receive a designation of “needs improvement” after two consecutive years of failing to make AYP, during which families must be notified and given the choice to move their student, whether they are proficient or not; 2) after three years of the “needs improvement” designation, 1/5th of all Title I program funds must target students with supplemental services to help improve scores, and students can receive these services whether proficient or not; 3) in year four and five of failing to improve, schools may be restructured, reformed, or taken over by the state; and finally, 4) if at any time a school fails to make the necessary improvement to meet AYP, or once a school has been restructured, reformed, or taken over, the cascading sanctions start over. These sanctions have resulted in designating many schools located in low-income communities of color as “failing” (Apple, 2004; Lipman, 2013).

In addition to over-identifying “failing” schools, these designations also created specific rhetoric, positioning traditional schools as the problem, and schools of choice as the solution. President Obama’s Blueprint has contributed to the increased growth of charter schools across many states by the closing down of schools and the opening of choice schools, including new charters (Lubienski & Lubienski, 2006). The name “blueprint,” itself, is considered a political allusion to the NCLB Act, which did a poor job of outlining exactly “how to” improve the
academic achievement scores of children across schools by 2014, which was a seemingly impossible task (Hess & Petrelli, 2006). The main goals of this newer national policy are to outline specifically which aspects of public schooling need to change, and how to improve the academic achievement scores and schooling conditions for children.

Although states have flexibility in choosing how to implement these national priorities, the 2009 program, called Race to the Top (RTT), incentivizes states to adopt them by tying funding to these changes, for instance, by tying funds to include the adoption of the Common Core Standards. A Blueprint and RTT apply to charter schools in particular because these schools typically receive funding from their respective districts via their states. As a result of RTT and A Blueprint, the Department of Education in California adopted Common Core Standards in 2011. Further, the state policy in A Blueprint also reiterates the two main national goals of creating academically-prepared students, defined as those who are college- and career-ready, and addresses the safety/health of students as the main statewide priorities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010; California Department of Education, 2011).

What is often not included in these national policy incentives is a discussion about the sociopolitical context and its effect on educational inequality. Often, the very laws that aim to address racial inequalities in education fail to address these issues as a result, for instance, by “colormuting” (Pollock, 2004) race and using other signifiers in political discussions to describe the needs of “diverse learners.” Yet, clearly many policy debates across the United States currently imply that race matters, but without a clear emphasis on who the policy prioritizes or how to promote a more equitable education. Consequently, schools and states are left to determine and implement changes that address national priorities. Although this flexibility
should be helpful, this reactive positioning exacerbates deficit ideologies, often positioning schools of choice as the solution.

**Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I outline the unique case of California, a burgeoning state for for-profit hybrid alternative programs within the charter school movement because of market-based school reform policy (Wells, 2002). This policy and historical context is set up to analyze for-profit alternative programs and charters as a solution to the problem of traditional public schools. It also explains my analytic attention to the institutional response, whether reactive or proactive, as one way of understanding these so-called solutions, as they are experienced locally (versus what they are positioned as in national priorities). In the following two chapters, I use data obtained through ethnographic fieldwork to understand these new schooling sites, providing a detailed discussion within each of the chapters.
Chapter 4

In this chapter, I detail how Westgate Charter High (WGCH), as part of a charter management organization (CMO), sought to create safety and order for students. One of the main reasons WGCH was taken over by the CMO was because it was considered a “failing school” under current national policy regulations (see Chapter 3). In addition to low test scores and high dropout rates, violence was one of the top three reasons cited for converting WGCH from a traditional public high school to a charter school (citations removed to retain confidentiality). In this chapter, I address my first research questions: How do school personnel structure order?, and How does this address students’ senses of safety? This analysis draws on field notes, individual and focus group student interviews, and individual interviews with school personnel. I find that because school personnel perceived the community as dangerous and violent due to gangs and gang activity, policies and practices implemented at the school were meant to deter gang affiliation to protect students from each other, and from the community at large. This positioned the school at odds with what was ultimately seen as a community value (i.e., gang affiliation).

Sections One and Two answer the research question: How do school personnel structure order? Due to WGCH’s problem-based approach, school personnel defined order as assuring safety (i.e., order as safety), and therefore, adopted a uniform dress-code policy; created symbolic, as well as physical barriers between the school and the community; and hired, as well as collaborated with, more school and local law enforcement, respectively. Additionally, school personnel defined order through their understanding of control (i.e., order as control). By viewing the gangs through a problem-based lens, I argue that the same policies and practices that
initially brought order to WGCH became a way to control students because of the over-attribution of gang affiliation to students.

Section Three answers the following questions: How does the way school personnel structure order address students’ senses of safety? Rather than addressing the problem of violence, WGCH’s views of order (i.e., order as safety; order as control) turned gang-affiliated behavior from brazen to discrete. Ultimately, this problem-based approach reflects an institutional failing, wherein some students continued to experience physical violence and did not feel emotionally safe in their school or community.

In Section Four, I consider the context of WGCH and delineate evidence-based ideas on how working collaboratively with the community—one of the school’s newer objectives—would have represented a more proactive and preventative form of order. I argue that such an approach, of which some evidence exists, may have promised a more effective alternative to addressing the real problem—the students’ need to associate with gangs in the first place, as well as the racial tension undergirding some of the violence. Consequently, I consider the missed opportunities for proactive approaches to working in concert with community stakeholders and the community itself to achieve safety for students at WGCH in the Discussion section.

Section One: Order as Safety

School personnel perceived the community outside of Westgate Charter High School (WGCH) as a risky, threatening, and violent setting because of gangs and gang activity. This perception translated into particular policies and practices intended to keep students “safe” from gangs. That some students were affiliated with gangs meant that the threat from the outside was also a threat inside, leading to policies and practices that effectively defined safety as a need to protect students from one another.
An interview with Jeannine, the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) who has led the charter management organization (CMO) for 13 years, represents the perspective that many personnel shared:

There isn't safe passage from home to school and from school to home. That's where things happen. And while I might feel safe 8:00 to 3:00, the minute the bell rings, I've got to worry about how I'm gonna get home. (J. Robles, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014)

Jeannine’s assertion that going to or from school is “where things happen,” and that students’ safety is only guaranteed during the seven hours they are at school reveals two important things: 1) this perspective largely rationalizes policies and practices best described as problem-centered approaches to student safety, where the “problem” is gangs and the violence resulting from gangs; and, 2) this perspective presumes an oppositional dichotomy of school versus community, rather than a continuous partnership of the school with—or in—the community. In subsequent sections, I describe how policy and practices related to uniforms, law enforcement on campus, and the physical layout of the school consistently evidence a problem-centered approach.

Moreover, I argue that such policies and practices prevent WGCH from taking a more preventative approach to student safety, which would diffuse the dichotomizing of community and school, and instead, afford greater opportunities to forge generative school-community partnerships.

**Order as Safety: Westgate Charter High as a “Safe Haven”**

School personnel interviews evidence the oppositional dichotomy created between the school and the community as a result of gang involvement surrounding WGCH. In the following excerpt, Ms. Adisa, a Spanish and English teacher in the continuation program, believes the school is a safe haven for students:

The school is a safe place. The students are comfortable here...They're comfortable and they don't want to leave. Because when they cross the street, that's violent. (A. Mosley,
Like Jeannine, Ms. Adisa confirms a view of WGCH as a place that promises safety to students. She adds, too, that students will inevitably confront violence as soon as they leave the school, and for this reason, students are comfortable in school and do not want to leave. That both the CAO and a teacher in the continuation program believe the school is a safe haven from the violent activity occurring beyond the school walls is important in understanding how, institutionally, the school desires to create order within the school in order to address what they perceive as a dangerous community, therefore positioning itself against the community. Consequently, the school’s approach becomes problem-centered, where gangs and the community within which they operate are treated as one in the same.

Views about the values of the community contributed to the positioning of the school against the community. Mike was the newly appointed Dean of Charter 1. In an interview with him (M. Fox, Personal Interview, December 10, 2013), he explains how his new role was created to combat the frequency of disciplinary issues that occur at WGCH as a result of enforcing the CMO’s new practices and policies:

[T]he frequency of discipline issues that occur here, it really creates a dynamic where the assistant principals who really need to be instructional leaders observing teachers in the classrooms were getting sidetracked by the amount of discipline that happens on a daily basis because of the enforcement of things that aren't common to this community in a sense of this school, this charter. Uniform policy, those kind of things. Those create dynamics that before [the CMO] took over the organization, the school didn't exist. So in doing that, they needed another admin on staff that would directly deal with those issues. And so it was a late, it was a late kind of poll that they did to get us in as deans last year. (M. Fox, Personal Interview, December 10, 2013)

In the previous passage, Mike explains how his role came about due to the enforcement of disciplinary sanctions the CMO instituted, including enforcing the uniform policy. Because this is now a frequent disciplinary issue at the school, as Mike suggests, it divested opportunities from the pedagogical imperatives the school administrators were required to facilitate, such as
being instructional leaders for teachers in classrooms. Mike’s influence over—and the power to maintain adherence to—new policies and practices was something the CMO found important enough to preserve, and thus resulted in creating a new institutional role within the school. I asked Mike to explain why disciplinary issues were so frequent. He explains that, in the community, it is both socially and normatively acceptable to be a gang member, suggesting that, unlike the school environment, the community accepts, and even promotes, gang association:

> I think dynamically you're dealing here, when you talk about stakeholders and you talk about value systems, some of the things that are valued contextually here in their social environment are both normatively and socially acceptable within those contexts. Take them out of our community here in [Westgate] and they're not. You're not valued as a gang member or... you know, those aren't necessarily valued outside this social context or the normative context. (M. Fox, Personal Interview, December 10, 2013)

In showing that community stakeholders value and accept gang members, Mike reveals, in turn, that this has not only created more work for school personnel in a literal sense, i.e., creating a new position to address the issue, it also put the school actively at odds with the community. Asking students to wear uniforms, for instance, according to Mike, put the school in a confrontational position in which it had to enforce a uniform policy meant to counteract what he perceived the community valued.

In creating WGCH as a “safe haven” from the community, Mike and other school personnel represented an institutional view that aimed to provide safety to students. This was accomplished by implementing practices and policies that created order within the school. In the following section, I detail these how the uniform dress code policy was one way of instituting order at WGCH from the problem of gang affiliation in the community.

**Order as Safety: Uniform Dress Code Policy**

The uniform dress code policy is one way of understanding how the school positioned itself against the community. The uniform dress code represents how school personnel defined
order as safety, and how such a definition largely derives from a problem-based approach to
gangs. I begin this section with Claudio. Claudio is a community resource officer hired when the
CMO took over WGCH. In the following passage, Claudio explains that gangs were the main
problem, and that the school needed new governance to address the issue:

[In] 2008 [the year the CMO took over], all campus was controlled by the gangs. Now we
don’t have that problem. We control the campus. We control the corners of the street.
Before the dismissal time, you couldn’t even go outside to the street to open the gate and
stay at the gate because they were right there at the entrance of the school. So little by
little, we need[ed] to make a presence and start pushing out to the neighborhood and get
control of the school. (C. Ortega, Personal Interview, May 6, 2014)

In describing how the CMO overcame the problem of being controlled by gangs, Claudio set up
the school’s gate as the initial gang barrier, describing that taking even a single step outside the
school into the street without confronting gangs was impossible. Over time, however, he
describes how the CMO, and perhaps even he, personally, pushed the gangs out, and into the
“neighborhood,” allowing the school to establish physical control that he perceives extends just
beyond the school walls (e.g., “we control the corners”). In this manner, Claudio, in a very
descriptive way, separates the neighborhood from the campus at the school gates. Positioning the
school against the community meant that the school had to distinguish itself from the community
and, more specifically, from signs of gang affiliation in the community. Consequently, one of the
ways the CMO worked to disassociate the school from the community was by establishing a
uniform dress code policy.

When the CMO took over, school officials implemented a school-wide uniform dress
code policy requiring students to wear a uniform shirt color that corresponded with their SLC
and khaki bottoms. For example, students in SLC Charter 1 wore white shirts and khaki bottoms,
while students in SLC Charter 2 wore blue shirts with khaki bottoms. The uniform policy states,
“it is the goal of [WGCH] to create a safe, orderly, and academically focused environment”
uniform dress code policy mirrors the school personnel’s mindset, such that requiring students to wear uniforms was at least one way they sought to create safety and order. The policy required students to wear uniforms, and also prohibited students from wearing any “double-meaning and gang-affiliated symbolism,” while also informing students that if they were “suspected of dressing in gang-affiliated colors” on designated free-dress days, they would be “directed to change or asked to leave campus” (Student Handbook, p. 14). It was clear through the policy specifications that gang affiliation was not tolerated on campus, as this was seen to contribute to an unsafe and disorderly academic environment.

The uniform dress code policy and practices enacted at WGCH aimed to keep students safe by requiring them to aesthetically disassociate from neighborhood gangs. The following interaction with Maria illustrates how gang-affiliated youth created chaos at the school prior to the school’s conversion to the CMO, supporting the notion that the CMO itself was a solution to gang involvement. Maria is an ESL teacher in Charter 1 who grew up in a neighborhood minutes away from the school, and who had been at the school before the conversion:

Maria: And it was chaos. I had all kinds of crazy students in there. The majority were affiliated to a gang or another.

Me: Was this back when they weren't wearing uniforms?

Maria: Yeah… 2002 before [the CMO]. And the reason why the kids were dressed up in gang outfits was not because they were really gangbangers themselves. But because you have to associate yourself with one group in order to survive. (M. Espinoza, Personal Interview, February 5, 2014)

In this passage, Maria depicts the school as “chaos” before the charter school took over. She attributes the chaos to the “majority” of students being affiliated with gangs. Upon my clarification, she notes the chaos had occurred before the charter implemented the uniform dress
code policy. She argues that, before the policy, even students who were not active gang members (i.e., “gangbangers”) felt compelled to affiliate with gangs “to survive” in the community. This implicitly suggests she sees the charter, inclusive of its uniform policy, as having brought order to the “chaos” by virtue of requiring students’ physical bodies to disassociate with gangs. As I will discuss in Section Two of this chapter, Order as Control, Maria’s understanding that students affiliate “to survive” suggests an alternate way that the CMO could have understood the problem of gangs, and represents a missed opportunity for the school to take a more preventative—rather than reactive or problem-based—approach to gang affiliation.

The uniform dress code policy served as a visual tool to differentiate students from each other. Nichole, the school’s probation officer, describes how color coding uniforms by SLC brought order to the school because it afforded easy visual reference for knowing where students should and should not be on campus: “I think it’s a little better controlled because they have different uniforms so you can be able to tell when people are out of place” (N. Truman, Personal Interview, April 22, 2014). This idea of school officials needing to locate students, and determine who is out of place suggests uniforms were not only about disassociating bodies from gang affiliation; it was also a mechanism to monitor and conduct surveillance on students from a distance. Visually differentiating students from one another meant school personnel did not necessarily have to recognize the students personally or get to know them individually to maintain order. Getting to know a student personally would have instead represented a more preventative approach to keeping students in their appropriate SLC. Instead, this purely reactive approach allowed school personnel to quickly assess when students transgressed a boundary, and represents one way in which school personnel sought to regulate interactions. I discuss this idea further in Section Two of this chapter.
In addition to forcing an aesthetic disassociation from gangs and offering a tool for visually differentiating where students should and should not be, uniforms were also a way to distinguish the academic commitment and the prospects of the students. For example, Hannah, the Charter 1 Vice Principal, understood uniformed students to be committed to their academic careers, and not what she perceived the community expected—that they were committed to gangs. In the following excerpt, Hannah explains that some students are victims of violence and gang-affiliated homes they cannot escape: “Some of our students have been shot, if not multiple times. They come from homes that are gang-related where they feel they don't have the opportunity to escape that environment” (H. Leiden, Personal Interview, May 16, 2014). Hannah proposes that the uniforms create an environment of academic commitment, representing a solution to violence and gang involvement. She says,

We don't look at your grades, we don't look at your scores, we don't look at your attendance, we don't look at how many years you've been in juvenile hall. We don't look at if you're a teen parent. We look at can you make it here to school every day. And if you're going to make the commitment to walk through that door in uniform, we're going to make the commitment to do whatever is necessary to get you to graduation and to college. (H. Leiden, Personal Interview, May 16, 2014, my emphasis)

Hannah positions the school as a place where students committed to showing up every day are provided with the necessary tools to graduate and go on to college regardless of their academic, criminal, or personal backgrounds. Building on her previous argument about home environments, Hannah is arguing that no matter how violent or gang-ridden an environment might be, students can “escape” by committing themselves to their academic futures. To Hannah, this is what wearing a uniform everyday conveys. In this way, the uniform dress code policy represents a structuring of order by compelling students to visually display their commitment to an academic future, instead of future involved with gangs and violence.
The uniform dress code policy represents a way school personnel defined order as safety, and how such a definition emerges largely from a problem-based approach to gangs. By positioning the school against the community through an understanding of the school as a “safe haven” and the neighborhood as violent and dangerous, school personnel sought to create order through the use of uniforms. A uniform aesthetically disassociated students from gangs, was a tool for visually differentiating where students should and should not be, and was a way to distinguish the level of academic commitment and the prospects for students. Understanding order as safety also manifested in other changes to the school. In the next section, I discuss the physical changes the school implemented at WGCH to keep students safe by the order.

Order as Safety: Physical Layout

WGCH made changes to the physical layout of the school as a way to create order as safety. During one of my first visits to the school, it was hard not to notice WGCH’s resemblance to a prison. For instance, an armed community security officer monitored the staff parking lot, and police cars were parked in and around the school’s entrances (Fieldnotes, October 7, 2013). Additionally, the visitors’ office operated like a waiting room. After I was asked to sign in by security personnel, called “community resource officers,” I was buzzed into the hallway from behind a counter, where a security officer was sitting on a stool. Security guards, whether community resource officers (CSOs), or conflict resolution suppression team officers (CRSTs), who were contracted via a private company, were easy to identify because of their respective blue and green uniforms and because they carried duty belts. The CSOs’ belts holster a two-way radio, and the CRSTs’ belts also include a baton and a firearm. Once inside the school, after I informed the enrollment officer I would be observing the continuation program that day, he began explaining how to go through the outside of the school to get to the At-
Promise Academy (APA) continuation program, and reminded me that the gates inside the school were locked. When I arrived at the gate closest to APA, four other school personnel greeted me because it was regular school start time. During subsequent visits after regular entrance hours, I was usually buzzed in via a two-way video surveillance camera (see Figure 4.1).

![Figure 4.1. Two-way Video Surveillance Camera and Buzzer on the Gate with a Tarp](image)

Although WGCH’s layout resembles a prison, what is more compelling to note is the overall objective that the physical layout of the school itself was meant to accomplish. For example, while components of the layout were to keep the school’s interior safe from an eminent threat from outside the school, other aspects of the physical layout were to keep students safe from each other. For example, the blacked-out tarp fences lining the perimeter of the school, and the two-way buzz-in system at one of the school’s entrances (pictured above), kept the school closed off to outsiders, creating a divide between the inside of the school, and the rest of the community. Additionally, chain link fences inside the school, which were guarded by security personnel, separated students from each other, and kept them in their respective SLCs. Although
the literal interior division may have been due to wanting to create a smaller, more intimate school feel for each SLC student, as well as to create order, the division also actively regulated the interaction between the students in different SLCs. For instance, since each SLC was color-coded via uniforms, this reinforced the idea of the racial and academic separation of students. Rather than allowing students to build community across SLCs, taken altogether, these ideas created a figurative and physical divide.

The use of video surveillance was a tool WGCH school law enforcement used to create order. Video surveillance represented a temporal tool used to assess when and where students were at all times through closed-circuit TV by having school law enforcement take turns monitoring cameras and reviewing images when incidents came up. Video surveillance, as I mentioned in the opening of the chapter, was visually prominent. From the moment I entered, I was buzzed in via a two-way video camera door system (Fig. 4.1), which led to a main hallway with video surveillance, and once inside, another camera monitored the room that housed the continuation-program students and school personnel. Cameras were meant to deter violence on campus and also act as a proxy for law enforcement officials.

The prominent use of video surveillance, adjusting the layout of the school to minimize contact between students, and separating them from the community were practices that came about, in part, to keep students safe from each other and to maintain order at WGCH. Due to the problem-based approach to the threat of violence among students due to potential gang affiliation, this also resulted in creating literal and symbolic barriers between the school and the community. These literal and symbolic barriers communicated that the community from which students came was the problem, and in turn, this positioned the school as the solution.

Order as Safety: Law Enforcement
Within WGCH, school personnel structured practices and policies to disassociate students from gang affiliation. In addition to the belief that the community valued and accepted gang members, which positioned the school at odds with the community, personnel also sought to create order by hiring more school law enforcement and collaborating with local law enforcement officials. School law enforcement includes community resource officers (CSOs) and conflict resolution suppression team officers (CRSTs) while local law enforcement refers to the deputy sheriff and police officers. When the charter management organization (CMO) took over WGCH, it sought to address the gang problem by adopting a national program focusing on positive behavior support training for school personnel, especially for the new security personnel. *Safe and Civil Schools* is a national program for staff development whose primary mission is:

To help school personnel create environments for children that are emotionally and physically safe and that foster independence, integrity, confidence, self-control, kindness, literacy, and responsibility in those children. (Safe & Civil Schools Web site, n.d.)

In the following sections, I will illustrate how the reliance on law enforcement further defined order as safety, and that this reliance on law enforcement as a solution to gangs (and the larger community) reflects a problem-based approach that prevented the CMO from taking a more preventative approach to supporting students. In this analysis, and in the daily realities of WCGH, law enforcement were institutional agents working in concert with the CMO, and who shared the institutional perspective that the community was a problem they had to work against to do their jobs.

In the following passage, Jeannine describes the CMO’s decision to adopt the *Safe and Civil Schools* national program at WGCH. In the passage, she describes what it means to institute
the program with school law enforcement, and her belief that students play a role in this
dynamic:

We have been using for the last six or seven years a program called Safe and Civil
Schools that's a nationwide program which is exactly that. How do you create safe and
civil schools? And so we're really heavily dependent upon relationships. Not fear. Kids
don't care about what your title is, or who you are, or even if you have a badge. It all
boils down to what’s my relationship with you? Is there a level of respect going both
ways? So, we do a lot of training with our staff, particularly our security staff, on how to
approach students with a level of respect and dignity. (J. Robles, Personal Interview, June
2, 2014)

Creating an environment for students that fosters independence, integrity, confidence, self-
control, and kindness is an important aspect of the national program. Similarly, Jeannine
emphasizes that being heavily dependent on relationships with students, rather than relying on
rank (e.g., titles and badges) creates safe and civil schools, and she seems to see law enforcement
as primarily responsible for bringing about that level of safety. For instance, although Jeannine
draws attention to the students’ lack of care about rank—e.g., the titles and badges—it is clear
she views law enforcement as essential actors in creating a “safe and civil” school for students.
Consequently, positioning the school in partnership with law enforcement is a vital part of its
solution to the school’s gang problem, as Jeannine sees the promotion of safety and civility
instead:

So we've tried to work with those external vendors as well as with the sheriff, as well as
the Westgate PD to create safe passage routes for students. The problem is, safe passage
doesn't extend indefinitely. People have started to figure out what street safe passage ends
on. And so now we're seeing increasing incidents over there. So we've really tried to
work with the police to say that's your jurisdiction. You need to work with us. And they
have. I can say the WGPD Southeast Division has been very collaborative, especially
since they've started to see the changes. They had a lot of issues with WGCH students in
the past wreaking havoc in the community, and they've seen the change. (2014)

In the effort to provide safety outside school boundaries, Jeannine describes the CMO’s
partnering with local law enforcement worked to extend “safe passage” to students coming to
and departing from school grounds. According to Jeannine, local law enforcement has worked collaboratively with the school, in part, because they saw positive changes, believing that it was the CMO’s sincere efforts that addressed the problem of gangs in the community. This is evident when Jeannine signals the law enforcement had “a lot of issues with WGCH students,” that is, with pre-CMO students “wreaking havoc” in the community. Rather than working collaboratively with the community, Jeannine emphasizes working collaboratively with law enforcement, and seeing their role as the most essential component to solving the problem of gangs. This dependence on law enforcement continues to reflect a problem-centered approach to gangs, albeit with a more proactive process, i.e., asking law enforcement to build personal relationships with students.

Similar to Jeannine, Roman, a mathematics teacher who had been teaching at the school for almost 20 years, agreed that developing personal relationships with students is an important role in creating order as safety, and seems to see law enforcement as filling that responsibility. Roman (R. Greco, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014), who also attended the school as a student in the early 1990s, echoes the idea that the CMO is perceived by many as having solved gang-related violence by increasing the presence of law enforcement on campus. When asked how he felt about the gang-related violence since the CMO took over, Roman shares the following:

I would say [it’s] the first most obvious impact. We still have our moments, but we haven't had any of those moments. The ones that I was used to before. In addition to that, even sometimes you'll hear people complain about our campus aides. But gone are the days when you could just walk into campus and no one tells you anything. You know? (2014)

In addition to agreeing with Jeannine that the CMO addressed gang-related violence when it took over WGCH, Roman goes on to argue that this was due to the increase in-school law enforcement. He adds, despite complaints about security personnel, their presence means campus
entry is tighter, and not just anyone can step foot on campus. In this way, Roman views security personnel as a barrier to outside threats while also acting as a filter by determining and questioning who enters school grounds. Such roles for law enforcement (barrier or filter) are not without tension. Roman attributes the tension to the authoritative appearance of the new school law enforcement, some of which are the CRSTs I observed carrying guns in their holsters. Often these law enforcement officials on campus simply stood in halls and between SLCs watching students switch from class to class or enter and leave the school without saying much to them. Despite his beliefs, Roman goes on to describe the need for a better relationship between security personnel and students:

[There’s] even something to be said about the militant-looking group, CRSTs. Even that’s had some impact. I still feel like that relationship needs to be worked on a little bit better. Especially this year, I’ve actually noticed some really good people on board that we could be utilizing a little better. But even they have had an impact. They’ve definitely had an impact. The sheriff has had an impact. He's [a] fucking sheriff. He's a real sheriff. Asshole and all. He's a real sheriff. It definitely is nice sometimes to have that asshole. (2014)

Here, Roman admits that although by their appearance they look militant, CRSTs—or any type of uniformed law enforcement on campus—have had a mostly positive impact at WGCH. Yet, he also sees a need to improve relationships between the students and these entities. For example, in drawing attention to the importance of the role of a sheriff (“He's a real sheriff. Asshole and all.”), it is clear that on the one hand, power via militancy is “nice” to have around, yet he also wishes they would improve their relationship with students (“I still feel like that relationship needs to be worked”). In this way, he reveals that despite the training of school law enforcement under the national Safe and Civil program, they have more to learn in terms of building relationships with students. More importantly, in meeting the goals of the program, which are not to quell violence and create order, although that was important to do in this
context, their job was to foster physical and emotional safety. To this extent, the CMO’s limitation in working with the students and the community proactively in order to address the reasoning behind the gang involvement is evident.

In my time at WGCH, it was apparent that while some law enforcement had developed relationships with students, ultimately, relationship-building with law enforcement was primarily about suppressing violence. It was not what Jeannine, the Chief Academic Officer of the Charter Management Organization, set out to do in concert with the Safe and Civil program. For instance, in my interview with Claudio (C. Ortega, Personal Interview, May 6, 2014), I asked what he thought of the various risk factors students are exposed to in the community. Claudio directed me to administration, explaining his role as law enforcement in this way:

That's something normally the counselors are taking care of. The administration. As law enforcement, we don't do that. We don't have access to tardiness, we don't have access to a file on the students, so we don't know exactly if these students come to class every day, who is doing work, how many credits he has. We don't have access to any of that. Our job is straight.

Although building on the relationship between students and law enforcement appears critical for administrators and teachers at WGCH, here Claudio is saying that the personal information of a student is irrelevant to his work. Claudio also explains that when he was hired, his role on campus was “[t]o clean the campus. Because there was a lot of gang activities. A lot of drug dealings, a lot of weapons come to campus.” To Claudio, his role as law enforcement is straightforward, namely, to cleanse the school of the gang problem. Not only is he disconfirming the school’s attempt to have a more proactive approach to relationships between students and law enforcement, despite their problem-based approach to gang involvement, he is also suggesting that his only interactions with students are when it requires him to cleanse the campus of gang
involvement. This meant that Claudio was not getting to know students in a personal way in order to proactively encourage them to do well in school, rather than join a gang, for instance.

Claudio’s perspective as one in which school law enforcement understood their involvement to be necessary only to curb the gang problem was a prevalent one I observed in my time at WGCH. There were, however, some school law enforcement officers who, over time, had developed relationships with particular students due to other “problems.” For example, the case of Enrique (Personal Interview, April 30, 2014) offers an alternative problem that school law enforcement sought to help address. Enrique was one of the students in the continuation program close to graduating when I first began observing at the school and, in fact, he was one of seven who graduated before the academic year was over. He had transferred from another high school after his basketball coach left the previous school. During that transition time, he learned he was missing school credits. He chose WGCH for the basketball team, although his mother did not want him to attend due to the school’s gang-affiliated, violent reputation. In an interview with Enrique, he mentioned that he never really got to play on the basketball team because he did not have a “good personal relationship” with the head coach. Enrique shared that he was a good basketball player but never “figured out how to deal with the coach.” In fact, due to not getting along with his coach, he often became disruptive during practice, and as a result, school law enforcement was summoned to the gym to intervene. Consequently, Enrique developed great relationships with school law enforcement officers who tried to help him with his relationship with the coach. Enrique’s case represents a more proactive attempt by school law enforcement to develop relationships with students. These relationships were not directly meant to address the gang problem, but they were still a way of instituting order to a “problem.”
Given the main goals of the Safe and Civil program, WGCH still had room to grow. The CMO’s problem-based approach to gangs and the community, and the use of law enforcement to create order, prevented school personnel at WGCH from instituting a preventative approach. I discuss this idea further in Section Two, where I detail how local law enforcement used other tactics in their interactions with students (see Order as Control: Law Enforcement). Hiring school law enforcement was a problem-based approach to addressing gang affiliation at WGCH, and one that became a dependent relationship.

Summary of Section One: Order as Safety

Up to this point, I illustrate how via an understanding of order as safety, school personnel adopt a uniform dress code policy, introduce practices in the physical layout of the school, and quell violence via law enforcement. The school’s decision to differentiate itself from the community and focus on creating safety inside the school rather than working collaboratively with community stakeholders consequently led to an understanding of order as safety. I argue that viewing order as safety led to student control.

In Section Two of this chapter, I discuss what “order as control” means by considering how, despite the appearance that safety was achieved via order, this did not actually ensure the safety of the students. After all, the school addressed the consequences of community violence, not the reason it existed in the first place. Consequently, in the following section, I consider to what other purpose order at WGCH could be for if not simply to keep students safe. By examining the policies and procedures introduced by the CMO below the surface, I consider the ways my analysis also point to a different motive behind order at WGCH. Rather than only as a safety structure, I argue that the order was meant to control interactions, rather than build relationships with and between students.
Section Two: Order as Control

Using a problem-based approach to gang affiliation at WGCH gave rise to policies and practices related to uniforms, law enforcement on campus, and the physical layout of the school that created an oppositional dichotomy of school versus community, rather than a partnership with—or in—the community. These practices and policies also prevented WGCH from taking a proactive approach to student safety and order because school personnel perceived the community as a threat, at odds with the schools’ values. The tactics that emerged from viewing order as safety appeared to quell the violence at WGCH. In addition to quelling this violence, taking a problem-based approach also introduced coercion, as these practices and policies promoted the view of order as control. For example, instituting a uniform dress code policy meant that school personnel had to “deal with” those students who did not show up in uniform. Rather than garnering support for the uniform policy through trust, for instance, school personnel sought instead to regulate interactions.

In this section, I argue that the same policies and practices that defined order as safety also led to an understanding of order as control. In particular, I argue that this view of order as control resulted from a problem-based approach to gangs that led to regulating interactions. Initially, order as safety was meant to address the prevalent gang-related violence, but it also led to regulating interactions. Ultimately, due to the problem-based approach to gang affiliation, order was also seen as controlling students both academically and physically. For instance, in the next sections, I illustrate how order as control was meant to compel students to conform to the rules or order, rather than offer actual safety. I also discuss how school personnel came to view students’ races and future prospects via uniform color due to their associations to a particular small learning community (SLC). Further, I present the ways that order as control created a
highly structured learning environment that socially and intellectually alienated students. Finally, I argue that school and local law enforcement became a threat and a tool to coerce students into acceptable academic and physical behavior. This promulgated an understanding at WGCH of order intended to control students, rather than to simply keep them safe.

**Order as Control: Westgate Charter High as an Oppressive Force**

Order as control meant regulating interactions for both students and teachers. Maria, a Charter 1 ESL teacher (M. Espinoza, Personal Interview, February 5, 2014), uses a metaphor to describe the CMO’s role in instituting the order as control changes at WGCH, likening the CMO to the Taliban, and the school to the Afghani people:

> They [the Afghans] had invasion after invasion, there was always war. Right. So first, the Russians came in and there was a war. And so the people in Afghanistan rose up against it. So then the United States came and invaded as well. So there was another war. Right. And then the Taliban came in. And the Taliban promised peace and promised a form of, a form of, um, stabilization because it was just chaos in the country. Years and years of war. So the people welcomed the Taliban. When the Taliban were able to kick out all the foreign invaders, people went out there and celebrated because they were going to have a period of peace. So now the Taliban came in, and, of course, there was peace. But at what cost? The Taliban became then this terrible oppressive force that destroyed every type of human right. And so this is, maybe I'm exaggerating, but I feel like after so many years of chaos at [WGCH], they needed something. We needed something. And so [the CMO] came about for that. And I've been working here at CMO for six years…and I think I reached that point where the change you did stabilized the chaos of what's happening but at what cost? I think there is a lot of oppression.

In the preceding passage, Maria compares the CMO’s takeover of the school as initially promising peace and stability, much in the same way the Taliban in Afghanistan appeared, at first, to promise peace and stability. Later in the passage, she asks a rhetorical question about the cost of that peace and stability, concluding that kicking out “foreign invaders” to create order ultimately cost them their liberty and resulted in oppression. In the following sections, I illustrate how order as control organized how school uniforms, law enforcement on campus, and the
physical layout of the cyber continuation program at WGCH sought to control students, and not just make them safe.

**Order as Control: Uniform Dress Code Policy**

Uniforms were meant to disassociate students from gang involvement, and thereby create safety by instituting order. However, uniforms also contributed to the stigmatizing of students because of beliefs about race or academic prospects due to the concurrent academic sorting of students within each SLC. In this way, uniforms seemed to racially and academically sort students rather than provide safety. Further, the zero-tolerance approach to being out of uniform made the uniforms seem more of a way to control students rather than keep them safe.

The uniform dress code policy ushered in a protocol meant to deal with students who resisted. For instance, the front office of each SLC set up a clothing rack with uniform clothes in different sizes. This, in turn, meant keeping track of who borrowed what, and tracking students down to return these articles of clothing. Other times, it meant providing students uniforms free of charge if families, for example, could not afford to purchase the required clothing. In an interview with Juan, an office assistant (J. Valdez, Personal Interview, April 22, 2014), he explains students’ resistance to the uniform policy as “their biggest pushback”:

There's just been a lot of resistance to abiding by the uniform policy. And that makes our job more difficult, but we have to enforce the rules… That's their biggest pushback. And I try to explain to them, break down the word. It has two parts to it. Uni-form. Uni means one. Uni means *one* (his emphasis). Form. One form. We're giving you an opportunity to make it your own, but to a certain extent. You can wear a jacket, or you can wear a sweater. It just has to be black, and it can't have a hood. You know. That's up to you. You can wear shorts, or you can wear pants, or you can wear a skirt. That's up to you. But it has to be this color. And it has to be a minimum length. So we still give you options…We still expect you to be as close to one form as possible.

As the office assistant, Juan deals directly with out-of-uniform students who are prevented from entering class. As he suggests, those who come to school out of uniform make his job more
difficult. The emphasis on “one form,” according to Juan, compels conformity from the students while also allowing students to express their unique, individual identities. Whereas the uniform dress code policy, as described in Section One: Order as Safety, was intended to help students disassociate from gangs, and therefore achieve a level of safety, Juan’s words suggest the policy was also about replacing such affiliation with conformity to one form, a form sanctioned by the school. How uniforms in this setting reflect the institutional desire for order as safety, but also, order as control, is important to understanding the social and academic regulation of students at WGCH.

While Juan emphasized the notion of “one form,” in fact, there were multiple “forms” at play in WGCH. As described previously in Order as Safety: Uniform Dress Code Policy, each uniform corresponded to a particular SLC (see Table 4.1).

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLC and Corresponding Charter Number by Uniform Color and Type of Student</th>
<th>Shirt Color</th>
<th>Typical Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter 1 SLC</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>On track, A-G coursework for all grades (9th-12th); ELL students; resource specialist program (RSP) students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter 2 SLC</td>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Not on track for A-G coursework for 9th grade students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter 3 SLC</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Mild mental retardation students; A-G coursework for 10-12th grade students (a mixture of on track and not on track); New students were placed here if they entered mid-academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter 4 SLC</td>
<td>Light Blue</td>
<td>Not on track A-G coursework for 10-12th grade students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-Promise Program</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Cyber continuation students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 shows there were five different uniforms at WGCH corresponding to the SLCs and the At-Promise program. The idea that students’ conformity to multiple uniforms is about regulating interactions is compelling, given the racially and academically stratified nature of the SLCs.

Students at WGCH were academically stratified through their uniforms. Students from feeder middle schools had academic records that were used to place them in a corresponding charter. All other students underwent a placement test when they enrolled at WGCH that determined their SLC. For example, typical students in white collared shirts (Charter 1) were college-bound 9th graders, placed along 10-12th grade peers, who were also on a normative college-track, i.e., they do not need remedial coursework; students in light blue collared shirts were commonly understood as not on track A-G coursework for 10-12th grade students; and so forth. The tracking of students by SLCs with the corresponding uniform is done in an effort to create order for students. In addition to academic or behavioral parameters that determine SLC placement, the differentiation of SLCs (which corresponds with differentiated uniforms) created pernicious associations between students’ academic prospects. In this way, rather than associating with gangs, the interactions of students were regulated via uniforms, creating academic stratification by SLC, which indicated the perceptions of students regarding future prospects. This unfortunate correlation largely explains student resistance to the uniforms.

While observing the school during a school fire drill, school personnel and students were required to participate by reporting to the football field (Fieldnotes, October 24, 2013). As I walked out with the continuation program students, Grey and Nick stated they did not want to be seen out there in their uniforms. Meanwhile, Beto laughed, telling some of his friends that he

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2 Continuation program students’ green shirt uniform was not mentioned along with the other SLCs. Technically, since they were housed within Charter 1 SLC, that meant that charter had two different uniform colors.
would “rather burn to death than go out.” While we were out on the field, Ashley and Mayra mentioned “how embarrassing” it was, as they talked about being in their uniforms and seen to be affiliated with the continuation program. Students were embarrassed, in part, because the “green shirts” (of the continuation program) were known as “the place where the dummies go” (A. Mosley, Personal Interview, March 28, 2014). Further, the continuation-program students were not the only ones who were defined because of their uniform color. To Yesenia (Y. Martinez, Personal Interview, March 24, 2014), it was evident what each uniform color said about each student:

The white shirts are known more as the EL [English learner] students in Charter 1. And Charter 1 is the greatest school at Westgate. So if you’re part of Charter 1, you’re top dog at Westgate. And then if you’re a gray shirt, those are the ninth graders. If you’re a black shirt, you tend to be African American and you tend to be a little rowdy. And the baby blue shirt, they’re just average, no big deal.

Although the uniform dress code was supposed to be about establishing order to keep students safe from gang affiliation, the new SLC-affiliated uniform colors now became a way that school personnel differentiated students by race in addition to academic ability. In the previous excerpt, Yesenia not only reveals her assumptions about how each uniform color defined students but also reveals her racialized interpretations of the behavior of Black students as “rowdy.” The “blue shirts” were typically understood as students who were in remedial courses for the college-prep track. Further, the underlying racial perceptions appeared to be due to racial tension in the community, which I discuss in Section Four: Racial Tension of this chapter. The uniforms became more than a way to create safety. Instead, they were also meant to control students via race and future prospects.

In an effort to understand how Yesenia and other school personnel got these racialized and academic perceptions, I asked her, and she said, “…the fights and the security guards, this, this, and that. I think that’s where I get my perceptions from. Whatever is happening on the
radio, that’s pretty much the important stuff that’s going on in the school” (Y. Martinez, Personal Interview, April 22, 2014). Yesenia was referencing the two-way radios used in each classroom; a practice that was implemented so security personnel could intercede and regulate student fights. Now, to protect teachers from being involved, or from having to deal directly with uncooperative students in class, teachers were instead required to call security personnel to help escort students out of class. As a result of these calls, other school personnel were privy to every incident that came up on the two-way radios across the school. Inevitably, these conversations structured the way students were understood vis-à-vis race and academic ability. These day-to-day radio interactions had less to do with order as safety, and more to do with making sure students were under control. Further, the perception of students via their uniforms was a way school personnel understood order as control, and not just safety.

Addressing gang affiliation from a problem-based approach led to an understanding of students through a racial and academic approach to order as control. In this way, rather than gang affiliation, WGCH regulated the interaction of students to be SLC specific. In the next section, I offer an analysis of the ways that order as control created a highly structured learning environment that socially and intellectually alienated students.

**Order as Control: Regulation of Space and Social Interactions**

Order as control reinforced the criminality of students through practices and protocols with respect to the physical space and control. Student misconduct and school spaces were often referred to using language associated with the prison and the criminal justice system. For instance, students who were not compliant or became disruptive were put in a front-office room with a single door and one window, referred to by both school personnel and students as “the hole.” This term is a reference to solitary confinement, where inmates are taken when they break
prison rules, and where they are isolated from the rest of the population. More tacitly, sending students to “the hole” became a way to physically control student bodies by having a designated space for such occasions that school personnel deemed warranted. The language of law enforcement was used to refer to outside areas, as well, as with school officials referring to the main quad as “the yard” (Fieldnotes, November 10, 2013). Prison and criminal justice system discourse and practices were not limited to the physical environs of the school itself. The continuation program also employed comparable practices to control student interaction and learning.

The comparisons between correctional facilities and the campus often extended to ways of describing or discussing students. Within the continuation program, Ms. Castillo, the At-Promise Academy (APA) Corporation Educational Consultant (E. Castillo, Observation, November 20, 2013), led a weekly professional development meeting with the vice principal, Mr. Addington. During these meetings, they discussed ways to monitor the progress of students, and, among other things, create complex reward systems to meet progress goals. In these discussions, which included all four program teachers, Ms. Castillo often compared the school’s students to students who were taking online curriculum courses in a correctional facility. According to Ms. Castillo, these two student groups (those at the charter school and those in corrections) had similar academic backgrounds (Fieldnotes, November 20, 2013). Part of the reason the incarcerated youth achieved their daily goals, according to Ms. Castillo, was due to rules that prevented peer interaction. Because their progress was credited to a lack of interaction, one solution for helping APA students’ progress was to create a highly-controlled environment in which student interaction was also discouraged. Thus, order as control was accomplished through the physical layout of the cyber continuation program, but also in the pacing of
curriculum, the development of a complex reward system, and the insistence on limiting students’ interactions with their teachers and peers. What follows is a description of these protocols that reflect Ms. Castillo’s idea of supporting student achievement by controlling their interaction with others.

The physical layout (see Figure 2 below) (e.g., carrel desks, seating arrangements, etc.), and temporal separation and set up of the continuation program, (e.g., one morning/one afternoon session, time-based check in with timecard and clock, students given staggered classes, etc.), were meant to control student interaction with both each other and their teachers. This was a contested practice among students and school personnel who strategically overlooked these regulations. For example, by the end of the year, almost no students in the continuation program were clocking in using the clock and timecard. Additionally, despite not being allowed to congregate around teachers’ desks, students knew who would be allowed to do so, as well as when, and acted accordingly in order to interact with both their teachers and peers.
Thus, one of the other ways WGCH school personnel understood order as control—and not safety—was in regulating student interaction with peers and teachers. In the continuation-program space, students were discouraged from speaking to one another or working collaboratively, an informal rule implemented as a result of the way their curriculum was set up. For instance, students were organized in carrel desks that kept them focused on the screen in front of them, which blocked their views of peers sitting next to them, and encouraged them to work individually. In reality, the carrels did little to stop student interaction, despite being designed so students could work independently on online curriculum material.

Regulating social interaction was a way to control, rather than offer safety to students and school personnel. Because of the various safety and order techniques employed to control student interaction, students were prevented from positively engaging with peers and teachers. A seating chart was used to keep those with a tendency to talk to one another separated, and students were moved regularly based on those interactions, which were increasingly seen as distracting. In addition, rather than checking in with a teacher as they came in, student attendance and punctuality were monitored through a timecard. Timecards were located at the entrance wall with the stamp clock. Together, the use of seating charts and the timecards prevented students from engaging in social interactions.

Although various practices instituted were supposed to limit or remove interaction altogether, these were highly-contested practices. One of the most contested interactions I observed occurred when a student was taking a section quiz. Although quiz procedure was to ask a teacher for clarification after completing a study guide of the lesson’s quiz, students found ways to help each other and get help from adults in the classroom. Transgressing the rule of no
interaction often came in the form of “communal quizzes,” as one teacher called them, which occurred infrequently, usually when students were visibly frustrated or checked out because they could not move on from a lesson despite the study guide. Communal quizzes allowed students to get help from peers, but were not intended to allow for adult help. However, because I was not aware that student-adult interaction during quizzes was not allowed until a few months before the academic year ended, students often asked me for help or they asked substitute teachers (who were also largely unaware of the rules). In my observations, whenever students took advantage of such rare opportunities to interact, they found ways to help one another and related to each other positively.

Regulating both the space and the interactions of students with peers and teachers was ultimately less about safety and more about order as control. In addition to socially and academically alienating students through this spatial and relational regulation, students were coerced academically and behaviorally by school and local law enforcement. In the next and final section, I illustrate how law enforcement became a threat and a tool to coerce students into acceptable academic and physical behavior, reinforcing the understanding of order as control, rather than safety.

**Order as Control: Law Enforcement**

WGCH personnel sought to create order by building relationships with school and local law enforcement officials. Administratively, this was accomplished by working collaboratively with law enforcement, and allowing them to take a more prominent, and permanent, role in suppressing violence at the school. At the same time, the new role law enforcement officials took within the school was primarily a problem-based one that signaled working against, or despite, the community. In Order as Safety: Law Enforcement, I illustrate how the CMO sought to
achieve order through relationships with law enforcement, however, in this section, I explain how collaboration with law enforcement more than instituting safety also became a tool to threaten, and ultimately control, students, as well as a way to reinforce the criminality of youth at the school.

In a more nuanced instance of understanding order as control at WGCH, school personnel relied on the school’s parole officer (PO) to talk to students who were not doing well academically, or those who were skipping class. WGCH now had a full-time, in-school PO, and as Nichole explains, “My entire caseload is straight up kids on probation. So I average about 50 kids. I'm not dealing with any kids that are at-risk at this time. All my kids are on probation” (N. Mosley, Personal Interview, March 28, 2014). Unlike some of her peers at other schools, Nichole explains her caseload is comprised of students already in the criminal justice system. During my interview with Nichole, for instance, she shared that, in addition to interacting with students in her already full caseload, administrators also used her to speak to students not currently part of her caseload:

I don’t have a problem talking to the kids and stressing the importance to them of having good grades, graduating, making sure that they're in class. I don't have a problem with it but I don't want [the administration] to use me as a threat either. (2014)

While she enjoyed talking to students and stressing the importance of doing well, Nichole was disturbed by what she saw as an inappropriate use of a PO. Specifically, some administrators would use her to speak to students before engaging their families:

Some of [the principals] try to deal with it on their own, they use me as a last resort. But then some of them use me as a threat tool…it's kind of frustrating because it's like, you call me before you call their parents. And I feel like I should be your last resort and not your first resort. (2014)

Nichole believes some administrators use her as a way to threaten students and to get them back on track academically, rather than as a last resort, for when students are already involved in the
criminal justice system. She explains that although not all administrators use her in this manner, some rely on her as the first person to contact, and also to use her as a tool to threaten them. This way of dealing with students reflects a problem-centered approach that views students as a problem to be dealt with by law enforcement. In contrast, contacting families and working to understand the underlying causes of a student’s behaviors before involving law enforcement would have signaled a proactive approach. Instead, this approach casts students as criminals before warranted. Thus, one of the consequences of viewing order as control through a problem-based lens was that students who were perceived as not cooperating were seen as a criminal-like problem. Although administrators may have been relying on a preventative tool guided by communication and understanding between those academically-struggling students and the school’s PO, ultimately this reinforced the criminality of the students themselves, in that the students who were not involved in the criminal justice system were now being referred to a law enforcement officer.

Thus, law enforcement officials were used as tools to threaten rather than working proactively with students and families. Claudio (C. Ortega, Personal Interview, May 6, 2014), one of the school’s security officers, describes how rather than engaging students’ families (read: the community), he informed students that if they did not want to get searched, they would be referred to law enforcement, principally to the deputy sheriff:

[I]f he [the student] doesn’t agree with us or he doesn't want us to search, we just inform him that we need to call the deputy, and the deputy has to search him. That’s the protocol. He [the student] has the right to have us check what he has, or he can deal with law enforcement.

In the previous excerpt, it is interesting to note that students, as minors, have no rights within school boundaries: they do not have a right to call their parents or ask why they are being searched. According to the ACLU (2016), students in California can be searched without consent
only under “reasonable suspicion.” Although this is aligned to educational code if there is
reasonable suspicion, Claudio’s use of the term “deal with” in regard to law enforcement reveals
the threatening role police play, and the way in which their power and authority can coerce
students: these students must choose between dealing with the rule (be searched) or deal with
law enforcement. This is coercion and control, and not order as ensuring their safety.

In other instances, law enforcement officials are inconsistent in enforcing order; instead,
utilizing their power when they find it necessary to control situations. For example, while
shadowing Mike one day, the school’s new dean, who was hired to deal with disciplinary
problems, I noticed that although he allowed a student to go to class despite suspicion that the
student was under the influence of marijuana, another security personnel performed a search:

While shadowing Mike (M. Fox, December 10, 2014) shortly after the bell rang, a
student wanders into the main quad of Charter 1, and before he was able to enter class,
two guards smiled and asked if he was “smoked out again.” The student denies it as he
smiled back at them. It was clear this was not the first time this exchange occurs between
the student and school personnel. The Dean [Mike] intervenes, and said, “So if I check
your stuff, I won’t find anything?” To which the student replies, “yeah, check my stuff”
no longer smiling, adding “why do you always pick on me, man?” He was then allowed
to go to his class. A few minutes later, the Dean was called to the office where the same
student had been sent by the teacher for disrupting during a test; suspecting that the
student was carrying drugs, another school guard searched the student’s belongings as
soon as he made it into the office.

It was unclear why, despite facing the same student with the same suspicion, one law
enforcement official decided to search the student after three others had decided to let the student
go, other than that the student who had been disrupting the test had given the security personnel a
concrete reason—other than just suspicion—to perform a search. Alternatively, perhaps, as
Yesenia (Y. Martinez, Personal Interview, March 24, 2014) suggests in the following passage, it
depended on which law enforcement officials were “willing to help out.” When I asked Yesenia
about the role of the deputy sheriff with the students, she explains:
Honestly, I think sometimes it really depends on the kids and who he's willing to help out or not. Because I've had previous cases where he just, he knew our kids were coming to this school with the green shirts but he would still give them a ticket. I don't understand how you know they're going to school and they're not supposed to be in school and you give them a ticket and they have to go through the whole process of going to court to fight the ticket to get the letter. Of course, it depends on his interactions before with the students. (2014)

To Yesenia, the inconsistent enactment of truancy ticketing suggested the deputy sheriff utilized power, as he deemed necessary to control interactions with certain students. In some cases, the deputy sheriff provided the students the benefit of the doubt, allowing them to enter school without ticketing them, while at other times, according to Yesenia, students were ticketed, and had to go through the process of fighting the ticket in court.

The prominent and permanent role of the new law enforcement officials at WGCH was also a tool to threaten and control students. Rather than creating safety through relationships, the way law enforcement officials do their job is inconsistent. They often utilize their power, as they find necessary to coerce students to abide by the policies and procedures. Ultimately, students have to bear the consequences of simultaneously being under the control of both the school and local law enforcement. In this way, the interaction that is regulated between students and law enforcement is also about control.

**Summary of Section Two: Order as Control**

So far, I have argued that in addition to seeing *order as safety*, school personnel also structured order through an understanding of *order as control*. Rather than only to address concerns for safety, I show how through a lens of *order as control* the same practices and policies implemented (e.g., uniforms, physical layout, and law enforcement) became about suppressing the interactions of students with peers and teachers. For example, I discuss how school personnel came to view students’ race and future prospects via uniform color because of
its association to a particular small learning community (SLC). I present the ways that order as control created a highly structured learning environment that socially and intellectually alienated students. Moreover, finally, I argue that school and local law enforcement became a threat tool to coerce students into acceptable academic and physical behavior.

In the next section, I illustrate how, ultimately, a problem-based approach to safety did not lead to students feeling safe. By presenting the students’ perspectives regarding each of the policies and practices implemented to address order, I show how these changes did not address the underlying issues at WGCH.

**Section Three: Student Perspectives on Order, Safety, and Control**

The underlying problem-based approach that school personnel in WCGH took to defining order was largely tied up in their understanding of gangs, gang affiliation among students, and gang activity as a value of the community. This perspective meant policies and practices designed to address order as safety were often transformed into methods to control the students. Indeed, by focusing on the issue of control (i.e., who controls the campus), WCGH foreclosed on opportunities to solve the underlying tensions that gave rise to gang violence and activity within and beyond the school. Claudio, a school law enforcement official, acknowledges that the shift in control meant illicit behavior was simply downplayed in the aftermath of the charter takeover:

And I don't know how much contraband I confiscated in the first two years [before the CMO]. It was a lot. Now, once a month, twice a month, [I] confiscate something. It's not like we don't have no more of that problem. We still have a problem. We still have a lot of kids coming under the influence, a lot of kids coming and bringing stuff to school. But they do it low key. They don't do it in front of the teachers, in front of everybody like they used to do it before. They had control of campus. Nobody said nothing to them because they were scared. Staff was scared; administrator was scared. Now it's different. Now we have control. If we see something like that, we take care of that. And they know that so they don't do it no more in front of you. (C. Ortega, Personal Interview, May 6, 2014)
In the passage above, Claudio suggests that rather than addressing the root of the problem, WGCH had merely managed control over gang-affiliated students on the campus. That is, while once students could openly be under the influence and bring drugs to school because the school personnel were too “scared” to act, students were now surreptitiously engaging in such activities. In this way, Claudio is suggesting the problem is not resolved—it has simply changed form as control shifted from gangs to campus security. In this next section, I draw primarily on students’ perspectives of the various policies and practices discussed thus far. I argue that, for students, WCGH’s problem-based approaches of order as safety and order as control left them feeling largely unsafe both within and beyond the school walls.

**Student Perspectives: The Impact of Gangs on Students**

In previous sections, I discussed the importance of the uniform dress policy to WCGH’s overall problem-based approach to gangs and gang affiliation on campus. As Lalis, a long-term student in the cyber continuation program described, instead of disassociating students from gangs, the dress code simply shifted gang-affiliation identification from one type of clothing to another. Lalis explained that local gangs associated some of WCGH’s shirts and the new khaki-colored pants to other local gangs. Lalis describes a walk to school with a friend during which her friend was “banged on” because of her friend’s uniform of beige pants and a black shirt:

> And I'm going outside, and all of a sudden, some guy that's just standing right there, he just goes up to him and starts banging on him. And talking smack to him. He's just going to school and the guy didn't even know him. He was just a random person right there. And you always see that happening, if you see somebody. Especially the uniform. It's the beige pants and black shirt like this. So obviously it's going to look like that. And you just see a guy all going up to him just for no reason, just because of the way they look. (L. Estrada, Personal Interview, October 31, 2014)

In the excerpt, Lalis describes witnessing “random” males approaching students. In this instance, the random male asked her friend where he was from, a form of “banging on him.”
attributes this to the uniform, explaining it is “going to look like that” (i.e., associating with a gang) because of the specific clothing. To her, the male went up to her friend because of the way he looked, *in his uniform*. When I asked Lalis what it all meant, she stated, “Our uniforms kind of makes it look like, you know how the guys wear the khaki pants, that's how they be dressing up too sometimes, like the *cholos*” (L. Estrada, Personal Interview, October 31, 2014).

Apparently, the khaki pants made it appear as though students were gang members (“*cholos*”) because that is how they are known to dress, as well. When asked if the uniform caused similar problems for all students, she said, “Yeah, the uniform and all that stuff. But not the green shirt no more. But the other academies, the white shirt and the blue shirts and the black shirts, that kind of make it look like that” (2014). According to Lalis, although the continuation program students were not directly associated with a local gang through the color of their shirts, the other uniform colors were problematic. When I asked Lalis if the uniform colors were those of local gangs, Lalis confirmed the following:

> Yeah. Around this area, there's a couple of cholos that live right here in this area and they always dressed up like that… in the corner, you would see them all dressed just standing right there not even doing nothing. Just standing right there and they were dressed up the same way as the students. It was just regular shirts, not the collared ones. It was like same color and everything. (2014)

In this passage, Lalis states that some local gang members dressed in the same attire as students, and although they did not wear collared shirts, the colors WGCH students now wore once again associated them with local gangs. The idea of requiring the students to wear uniforms was a means of addressing gang-affiliated violence, this no longer worked because local gang members now wore the same colors as those of the different SLCs. The school’s approach to gang affiliation failed to address the very problem it sought to solve: the impact of gangs on students.

**Student Perspectives: Lack of Safety Inside and Outside WGCH**
As discussed in Sections One and Two, WGCH school administration increased law enforcement on campus as a way to address the problem of gangs. Consequently, the school sought to build stronger relationships with school and local law enforcement officials to ensure students’ safety, although the relationships with law enforcement proved to be problematic, at times, as they also became a way to threaten or exert control over students. In this section, I present the student perspectives shared in focus groups on the problem of gangs and how, in general, the school’s approach failed to provide a sense of physical safety within and beyond the school walls.

Despite WGCH’s focus on increasing law enforcement, not having a preventative approach to gang involvement in the community proved difficult for keeping students safe inside, and outside, school boundaries. During a focus group interview, Nick (N. Smalls, Focus Group 1, March 26, 2014) indicated that, in school, “If you don’t get along with people, it’s not safe, they’ll try to stab you or like sometimes after school they try to shoot at you.” He provided this information when I asked the students whether they felt safe at school, a question that was formulated as a result of months of observations, and the analytic memos that I created regarding this seemingly prevalent issue at the school. I followed up by asking whether, perhaps, it was safer in class, and he replied, “sometimes I’ll have to get down during class”; by this, he meant fighting others in class. In this focus group interaction, the students directly expressed that they did not feel safe while at school.

In a separate focus group interview, and after prompting students on the same question (i.e., whether they felt safe at school), Nash (N. Wilson, Focus Group 2, April 9, 2014) adamantly shared that he did not feel safe “anywhere.” This, in turn, prompted Miguel (M. Flores, Focus Group 2, April 9, 2014) to ask, “I wanna know why though. Why don’t you guys feel safe?” At
which point, Gwen (G. Rodgers, Focus Group 2, April 9, 2014), responding to Miguel’s question, exclaimed to the group, “You don’t even know what I got in my bag. Do you know what I got in here? No.” Through this statement, Gwen suggested that students could easily conceal something in their bags. Adding to the student perspective of why one may not feel safe within the school. Though not directly, Gwen suggests, a student could conceal something like a weapon, and go unnoticed, and that is why she did not feel safe.

After Gwen responded, Miguel then proceeded by sharing a more positive experience, stating he felt safe in the community, after qualifying his experience, adding that, despite “[growing] up really bad,” and “being a troublemaker,” he felt the “community knows [him]. …I’ve been on the other side where people don't feel safe around me…” he added. Although Miguel did not explain what gave rise to him feeling safe in the community, and his overall sense that others did not feel safe around him, through a personal interview with him (M. Flores, Personal Interview, February 14, 2014), I knew that Miguel had grown up with two older brothers who played a big role in protecting him. His older brothers, both of whom were affiliated with a major gang covering Miguel’s trek to and from school, offered him safe passage on his daily walking commute. Thus, although Miguel is not associated directly with a gang, his brothers’ association provided him a sense of safety in the community. This points to one reason why a student, who is not in a gang themselves, would want to associate with youth who are gang members.

Unlike Miguel, who had direct access to gang-affiliated family members who could provide safety on his walk to and from school, Nash, on the other hand, is an only child, and has lived in the nearby projects his whole life (N. Wilson, Personal Interview, February 26, 2014). According to Nash, living in project housing indirectly associates you with the gang located
within it, even if you are not directly involved; this is because a specific gang occupied each neighborhood project. Subsequently, Nash often had to fight and defend himself from being recruited into the local gang in his immediate surroundings since he refused to associate with the corresponding gang. Nash also shared that he had to defend himself whenever he visited other parts of the neighborhood, including cousins in other projects, due to being indirectly associated with the gang in the public housing in which he lived (2014). Therefore, Nash, unlike Miguel, did not have a sense of protection and safety in the community because he had chosen not to affiliate directly with gangs.

During the focus group, Nash shared that one thing he learned from his community “was to fight. They taught how me to fight. That’s one thing they did do. They did do that.” Miguel, still not quite understanding why Nash felt so unsafe, again tried to give Nash tips on how to relax in situations, and to know how to stand up for himself. This prompted a response from Nash, “So what would you do if I have a gun, and I tell all y’all pull out everything you got. What would you do?” Miguel, joined by Rosa, said they would run, and throw something at him, respectively, which offered comic relief from the potentially threatening statement Nash had just made, at which point the whole group started laughing. Nash then explained that he did not feel safe because “they don’t check me. I could be crazy. I could be a psychopath. You don’t know me. They do not check us.” Here, Nash directly suggests that students could conceal a weapon and bring it onto campus without the knowledge of school personnel, and that this is what, in effect, made him feel unsafe. In this instance, rather than focusing only on his experiences outside of school, he was directly implicating the school for not feeling safe. “They don’t check anybody,” he added, reinforcing the idea that students are to be treated as suspects or criminals. Though this may contribute to the idea that more law enforcement was needed at WGCH,
instead, I suggest that the students’ perspectives on the lack of safety within and outside of school were due to the problem-based approach. This approach addressed neither the direct nor indirect affiliation to gangs that students may have to broker to have a safe passage in the community.

I further probed the focus group as to whether they would feel safer if they had metal detectors at the entrances. As it stands, school law enforcement periodically operate handheld detectors in the main entrance. “Would y’all feel safer if they had metal detectors?” I asked. Nash responded, once again, that he would “feel safer if y’all had metal detectors, police officers, all that.” Another student, Maribel, replied, “They have police officers, they just don’t…don’t do their work.” In this last statement, Maribel implied that despite the number of law enforcement officers, she did not feel safe. Although Nash believed he would feel safer if there was more law enforcement and metal detectors used, given the prominent and permanent role law enforcement officials played at WGCH, it was surprising that any student would feel as if there was not enough security. What these paradoxical set of sentiments reveal is that, no matter the number of law enforcement officials, without addressing why students joined gangs, and why there was tension in the community, it would be difficult to provide students a sense of safety.

After this interaction, some students recalled a situation when school personnel, including law enforcement officers, were unsuccessful at keeping a particular student safe. They relayed the story of one afternoon when a continuation program student was beaten in front of the school. “He got kicked in his face, knocked down there and nobody helped him,” Dina recalled (D. Helm, Focus Group 2, April 9, 2014). Miguel then said, “They were waiting for the securities [school law enforcement].” This reminded Dina of her own experiences of not feeling safe at
school, despite all of the law enforcement; she concluded, “these are children at your school, it’s your job.” Through this, Dina was suggesting that law enforcement, and, by extension, the school was not keeping the students physically safe. Through these student conversations, students revealed wanting to be kept safe and protected from violence, even if it meant, at times, more law enforcement. What these student interactions also revealed was that current attempts at creating order did not address students’ feelings about a lack of protection from violence and harm.

**Summary of Section Three: Student Perspectives on Order, Safety, and Control**

In the previous section, I present student perspectives to illustrate how, without a proactive approach that includes community stakeholders, WGCH is unable to protect and keep students safe. I present how uniforms fail to dissociate students from gangs, and how despite the goal to keep violence outside of the school grounds, the students feel unsafe both within WGCH and outside its walls. Further, I analyze students’ beliefs that more law enforcement would provide them the type of safety they desire. Instead, I point to how, without addressing why students joined gangs, it would be difficult to provide students a sense of safety.

In the next section, I discuss crime in the community and school. In understanding the actual violence at WGCH and the surrounding community of Westgate City, I discuss how this has represented a real challenge in this setting. In addition, I argue that working with the community in a proactive manner that focuses on building relationships and understanding the context could offer safety and protection from gang-affiliated violence.

**Section Four: The Challenges at WGCH**

The characterization of the community surrounding WGCH as being violent and dangerous was not unfounded. For instance, according to the FBI’s 2014 Uniform Crime Report,
the U.S had a violent crime rate of 365.5 per 100,000 residents and a murder rate of 4.5. In Westgate City that same year, the violent crime rate was 490.71 with a 6.66 murder rate (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). Therefore, the per capita national incidence of violence and murder is slightly higher in Westgate City. In interviews with school personnel, they describe how this crime has affected their perspectives about a lack of order within WGCH. For example, Claudio (C. Ortega, Personal Interview, May 6, 2014), an on-campus security officer, confirms the chaotic and dangerous environment that gang-related activity created at WGCH when the CMO first took over. “It was really dangerous and a lot of violence and fights. Yeah. Three, four fights every break. Every lunchtime. Every day.” According to Claudio, drugs and weapons, in addition to fights, threatened the safety of those within the school. The view Claudio held was a common perspective of school personnel and largely supports their approach to order.

**The Challenges at WGCH: Violence**

Seven years since the CMO takeover of WGCH, the need to protect students and create safety within WGCH continued to be a challenge for school personnel. According to the annual Suspension and Expulsion Report for the 2013-2014 academic year (California Department of Education, 2016), WGCH had a total of 845 federal-level reportable offenses that resulted in some course of action for students (see Table 4.1 below).

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Code Section</th>
<th>Offense Description</th>
<th>Total Number of Offenses Involved in Suspensions, Expulsions, Other Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48900(a)(1)</td>
<td>Caused, Attempted, or Threatened Physical Injury</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900(a)(2)</td>
<td>Used Force or Violence</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900(c)</td>
<td>Possession, Use, Sale, or Furnishing a</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Controlled Substance, Alcohol, Intoxicant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48900(j)</td>
<td>Obscene Acts, Profanity, and Vulgarity</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900(q)</td>
<td>Hazing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900(r)</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900(t)</td>
<td>Aided or Abetted Physical Injury</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900.2</td>
<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48900.7</td>
<td>Made Terrorist Threats</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48915(a)(1)</td>
<td>Caused Physical Injury</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48915(a)(2)</td>
<td>Possession of a Knife or Dangerous Object</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48915(a)(3)</td>
<td>Possession of Controlled Substance</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48915(a)(5)</td>
<td>Committed Assault or Battery on a School Employee</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48915(c)(3)</td>
<td>Sale of Controlled Substance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48915(c)(5)</td>
<td>Possession of an Explosive</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These numbers of reportable offenses, and the local community crime statistics, are evidence of the need to protect and create safety for students.

The role that violence played in affecting students and teachers at the school was something Ms. Adisa, the continuation-program English and Spanish teacher, was well aware of (A. Mosley, Personal Interview, March 28, 2014):

I can't expect you to come here and concentrate if you got jumped on the way to school. Which is an actual story that happened a couple of days ago with a student. This school, and I've learned this from students, is on the cross-section of several rival gangs. And never once have I been prepared for that reality. You need to know who you're teaching. It's not a violin, it's not a crutch, but you need to know where you're teaching. And then I'm reminded. Sirens, helicopters. These are things we never talk about. White noise. But that is not normal. A helicopter, gunshots outside, that is not normal. But that's the reality for a lot of students. And it's never addressed.

In the previous excerpt, Ms. Adisa acknowledges the lived realities of students coming into WGCH from the community. She realizes the challenges that teaching at WGCH presents for teachers, and also confirms that due to rival gang affiliations in the community, violence is a reality for many students that, unfortunately, does not ultimately get addressed. She also believes that the normalcy of violence in the community is so prevalent that it is now experienced as
“white noise” and normal, but declares that it is, in fact, not what she considers normal. WGCH’s approach to working separately from the community to structure safety within the school through order replaced a more proactive initiative to deal with the realities of violence the students are now numb to. As Ms. Adisa suggests, this would not necessarily mean simply garnering sympathy or empathy and a lowering of expectations (“It's not a violin, it's not a crutch”), but rather, proactively addressing these challenges and, I argue, in communion with all stakeholders.

The Challenges at WGCH: Working in Community

By working with the community, other challenges the school faces could also be proactively addressed. For instance, in the following passage, Jeannine (J. Robles, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014) describes the community as highly transient, and asserts that this makes it “hard” for the CMO to focus on the “community engagement department”:

[T]hey do door-knocking, they go out and talk to local churches…really to try to educate the community on the differences between our school versus the school down the street. It's hard, though. It's a tough battle. You can't get to everybody. And you think there are enough charters, particularly in the [Westgate] community that it would be sticking at some point, right? But again, it goes back…they're highly transient populations as well so you're constantly having to reeducate newcomers. Either new to the country, or just new to the community. So it's a never-ending process. And we can always do a better job. I mean, we can always do a better job. I think our parent education piece and our community education piece is one of those areas we really need to focus on in the next four or five years to make sure we're where we need to be, and are actually collaborating in partnership with the communities versus this separate entity that just happens to be in the community. (2014)

In the preceding passage, Jeannine confirms that the community and the school have become separate entities. Although she recognizes the need to collaborate with the neighboring community, she sees this process more as educating the community, as well as educating the parents about the differences between WGCH and other schools. In this manner, the institutional goal appears more concerned with their branding (“educate…on the difference between our school versus the school down the street”) than getting to know the changing population in the
neighborhood, which, she admittedly understands, is “highly transient.” That the community consists of a highly transient population of newcomers to the country and the neighborhood was something Jeannine felt was challenging to keep up with.

Jeannine was not the only one who understood the challenges that a highly transient community represented. In an interview with Maria, she elucidates the inability of the school to separate itself from certain issues in the community. To Maria, even recent immigrants, “the majority” of students when she first started teaching, “were affiliated to a gang or another.” She explains:

And the reason why the kids were dressed up in gang outfits was not because they were really gangbangers themselves. But because you have to associate yourself with one group in order to survive. My students were all newcomers [recent immigrants]. If you did not belong to a gang, then they make you belong to one. That's the whole, where are you from? If you say you didn't have a gang, you had to join one or you get in trouble [beat up]. (M. Espinoza, Personal Interview, April 22, 2014)

Maria’s understanding of the violence in the community derived from gang affiliation, and her perception of how it affected her students was insightful. In explaining the gang problem, she suggests one reason why even “newcomers” to the country would end up associating was to avoid getting into “trouble” or beat up. As Maria explains, gang affiliation for newcomer youth represents a way to avoid violence in the community and, therefore, has implications for how one might more proactively address the experiences of new youth to the local community and the school.

**The Challenges at WGCH: Racial Tension**

Another challenge in working with the community was racial tension. In an interview with Yesenia, she suggests that the racial tension is due, in part, to what Jeannine and Maria also signaled in their interviews, i.e., newcomers. In the following excerpt, Yesenia is explains the difference in this tension since the school’s conversion:
It was different because it was one huge school and now it's separated. So that helps control massive amounts of people. And it was still the same. It was like half Blacks and half Mexican, half Latinos. And that was a tension before. Now I feel like there's some more Hispanics and there's less Black people, (Y. Martinez, Personal Interview, April 22, 2014).

When I asked her “What do you think changed…?” she replied:

I think the community itself is changing just because a lot of people are migrating out and more people are migrating in. There's more Hispanics migrating in. So the community itself has changed.

According to Yesenia, the community’s racial composition has changed due to the migration of Hispanics into, and Black people migrating out of, the community. She indicates there being tension before, when there was a larger Black community. This statement reflects Yesenia’s views of the community tension as highly racialized.

To others, the racial tension was related, in part, to gang affiliation. For instance, Juan suggests that gang affiliation initially played a large role in the racial tension between Latinos and African Americans:

[M]ost of the racial tension was because of gang affiliation. And it would be an African American gang against a Latino gang. And that just got extended to it doesn't matter if you're a gang or not, it's just whether you're black or brown. (J. Valdez, Personal Interview, April 22, 2015).

To Juan, racial tension extended beyond gang affiliation, so that it structured an understanding of black versus brown in the setting. Racial tension perspectives by school personnel provide another understanding of the community’s context. Understanding the community’s dynamics, in turn, offers a more proactive starting point to working with the community in addressing the challenges at WGCH.

**Summary of Section Four: The Challenges at WGCH**

In this section, my goal was to present the challenges that living and teaching in this community represents. Through violence statistics and school personnel interviews, one can
understand why order as safety became a way for school personnel to try to protect students. Still, this led to the social and intellectual isolation of the school and teaching environment through order as control, which was more about suppression than safety. The interviews in this section reveal the CMO’s intention to work with the community, albeit from a problem-based approach that has more to do with teaching the community, rather than working in partnership. Still, some of the school personnel’s understandings of the realities of their students’ lives and the actual violence they must learn to navigate offer insight into the challenges of this setting. Next, I turn to the final section of the chapter, to provide context for the findings in relation to the scholarly literature, theory, and practice.

Discussion

In the first two major sections of this chapter (Order as Safety and Order as Control), I analyze and present data to answer the research questions: How do school personnel structure order?, and How does this address students’ senses of safety? I find that the CMO and the school personnel at WGCH operate from a perspective that puts the community at odds with their goals to create safety, where they are positioned against rather than with the community. This problem-centered approach relies on reactionary practices and policies (Bucher & Manning, 2005) to instill order at the school. Listed under Sections One and Two, I present how school personnel structure order as safety and order as control (Research Question 1) that initially leads to suppressing violence and creating order; however, relying on these problem-centered approaches has developed into a need to control interactions, rather than a move toward working with the students themselves, or with the broader community, in addressing the violence stemming from gang affiliation. As a result, this did not address the underlying problem of students’ decisions to affiliate with gangs in the first place.
Additionally, in Section Three, I address the ways in which school personnel structure order does not ultimately address students’ senses of safety (Research Question 2). In that section, I present student perspectives to illustrate how, without a proactive approach that includes community stakeholders, WGCH is unable to protect and keep students safe. For example, uniforms failed to dissociate students from gangs, and despite the goal to keep violence outside the school grounds, students felt unsafe both within WGCH and outside its walls. Further, despite the prominent and persistent role of law enforcement, students were not protected and kept safe from violence.

Finally, in Section Four, I present the challenges that living and teaching in the community of WGCH represents. Though one can understand why order as safety became a way for school personnel to try to protect students, this led to the regulation of interactions through order as control. Some school personnel’s understanding of the realities of the students’ lives and the violence in the community is helpful to navigate the missed opportunities and to consider what could have been.

**Order, Safety, and Control**

This study is a direct response to the need for research that contextualizes school safety, taking into account the physical, temporal, and social contexts of schools (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Cornell & Mayer, 2010). By theoretically placing the school in the middle of the social order, and analyzing the school personnel’s meaning-making of both the problems and solutions to what is perceived as the safety threat, this study contributes to new research on the topic of order, safety, and control. Additionally, addressing these constructs in new schooling contexts provides insight into the differences—or lack thereof—in addressing safety in schools. Prior research, for example, has focused on understanding these processes in traditional public
Findings in this study reveal the importance of thinking of order, safety, and control as fundamentally linked. Research that discusses the ideological and sociological structuring of order and control in schools rarely address issues of safety (Hirschfield, 2008). Although the problem of safety in schools gains momentum when acts of violence in schools are publicized, the violence that students deal with in their day-to-day experiences garners less sustained attention. In this study, I show how students must focus on for their safety on their treks to and from school; though this is not new, it is a safety concern that schools must help students navigate. However, the problem-centered approach is more likely to compel schools to think that its responsibility for safety stops at the school gates.

Research on proactive approaches promotes safety in schools through prevention, rather than simplistic implementations, such as zero-tolerance policies (Fenning et al., 2012; Smith & Sandhu, 2004). In this study, I found that in an effort to structure safety, the school utilized a reactionary (problem-based) approach to discipline, in which the policies and practices that were implemented aimed to change the behavior of students, much like zero-tolerance policies. While these are not new ideas, as has been observed in many traditional public schools (e.g., Nolan, 2011), less is known about the role of charter schools and newer schooling contexts, and why they are largely unable to disrupt these problem-based approaches. Additionally, though WGCH was initially able to suppress some of the gang-affiliated violence, taking a crime control approach to violence, wherein students in gangs and those not in gangs are not differentiated, ultimately produced an “us” (school) against “them” (community) perspective on safety. Subsequently, school personnel’s understanding of order as control sought to structure and
regulate all students’ learning and interactions, rather than getting to the root of the problem of gang affiliation.

Proactive Vs. Problem-Based Approaches to Safety

The conceptual framework of the problem versus the preventative approaches to safety allowed me to differentiate between order as safety and order as control. Research suggests that creating a sense of safety in schools means more than eliminating stabbings, fights, and shootings, i.e., violence (Bucher & Manning, 2005). Rather, physical, intellectual, and socio-emotional safety in schools creates conducive environments to learn and contribute to a more holistic understanding of what is a safe school (Bucher & Manning, 2005). Both socio-emotional safety and intellectual safety are currently understood as part of school climate constructs (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013).

How safety is understood and structured in schools have implications for developing positive schooling experiences for youth. The literature on creating safety and order in schools focuses on problem-centered (e.g., guards, video surveillance, gates, and zero-tolerance policies) versus preventative approaches (e.g., building emotional literacy skills and a greater sense of community), pointing to the need for more preventative rather than reactive programming to effect positive long-term climate change in schools (Bucher & Manning, 2005). My findings suggest that WGCH took on a problem-based approach to safety that led to an oppositional dichotomy with the community. This understanding of the effects of problem-based approaches to violence adds to our current conceptualizations of school climates. For instance, what does it mean for the school climate to understand safety in opposition to the community and to actively structure its policies and practices to differentiate the school from what is perceived as a value of students and families (i.e., gang affiliation)?
Violence & Gang Affiliation

Student participants in this study revealed that they wanted to be protected and kept safe while at school and in their community. Family and school institutional factors limit some urban youth’s time in the neighborhood and, as a result, buffer the effects of urban violence, including participation in gangs (Rendon, 2014). Though WGCH took on a problem-based approach to the issue of gang affiliation, urban youth are exposed differentially, even within a single neighborhood, to peer ties that “bang.” Gang-affiliated youth, mostly comprising of males drawing on peer ties for symbolic and physical protection from neighborhood violence, is not a new concept. Although there are youth who are kept away from neighborhood contexts (for example, via family expectations) and bypass these associations, some young people are unable to change their unique family structures. Alternatively, though the school could offer programming to minimize exposure, it is also empowering and proactive to acknowledge youth’s ability to reshape their communities and learning environments and to build safer spaces. I discuss this point further in the following section.

Though neighborhood violence meant threats from gang-affiliated activities for young men, some young women indicated exposure to the sexually harassing trek they encountered to and from school. For instance, some young women wore sweaters yearlong, including in over 80-degree weather to avoid unsolicited advances, often from older males in the community. In other instances, young women were covertly offered money in exchange for sexual favors. Though research on neighborhood violence has focused predominantly on the experiences of males, future research should consider how sexual assault along young women’s paths to and from school constitutes an understanding of neighborhood violence, as well.

Collaborative Community-School Partnerships
The Chief Academic Advisor’s view of community engagement, much like the idea of “parental involvement,” not only places the burden on students’ families to get up to speed regarding WGCH’s objectives, it also fails to recognize how school-community partnerships are created. Here, I am referring school-community partnerships that provide knowledge and services to families and youth to create a sense of efficacy and to address social conditions that impede their senses of safety (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). For instance, learning to act upon and combat violence in their communities could offer youth the acknowledgment of their abilities to reshape the context of their learning environments, and to create proactive and empowered changes, representing a more preventative approach. Examples of schools working toward this goal are community schools. Community schools also represent new schooling contexts that are able to disrupt common problem-centered approaches to addressing violence for families and students. A recent review of community schools (see Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot, & van den Brick, 2016) shows that, overall, students benefit from school-community activities. Though the authors suggest that more solid evidence on the causal relationships is needed to be able to conclude that the activities alone affect the outcome variables (e.g., rates of academic performance, dropout, and risky behavior by students), multiple stakeholders working closely together can help ensure effectiveness.

One example of a community school is the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) and the 20 “Promise Neighborhoods” that this school has influenced. The HCZ is described as a comprehensive strategy for children, from birth to college graduation, in which students are exposed to community services along with educational interventions that range from a longer school days and years (i.e., with shorter or fewer holidays) via after-school programs to mental and physical health services (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot, & van den Brick, 2016). Though
existing schools could also adopt this wraparound service model, it would require scaffolding in order to enact long-term changes within school climates and violent neighborhood zones. Nonetheless, community schools do represent one long-term proactive approach to community violence.

Community-based organization and youth-led participatory action research (CBO-PAR and YPAR) is an alternative promising way to understand and address the underlying issues of racial tension, and the need for youth to draw upon peers for symbolic and physical protection, as well as to create positive, long-term changes in Westgate City. By partnering with the community (and possibly researchers), these proactive approaches to youth and community development, in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them, can work via collaborative community-school partnerships.

The Youth Organizing for Educational Change (2011) report showcases youth-led initiatives nationwide. By creating memos of understanding, some young people have received social science credit at school to participate in YPAR projects. Californians for Justice students, for instance, advocate healthy and just learning environments by being involved in statewide economic and political processes. Thus, rather than understanding and addressing problems from the perspectives of school personnel, youth and other community stakeholders working to develop their understanding of the various problems can better position schools to offer the types of support the community needs. Finally, CBO-PAR and YPAR represent ways of creating new schooling contexts that address issues and empower communities to disrupt reactionary approaches to the safety.
Recent research on educational expectations has established that there exists a college “norm,” or a college-for-all expectation, which policymakers and other education stakeholders hold for young adults (Goyette, 2008; Rosenbaum, 2011). Some of this research focuses on college outcomes, such as whether students are set up to succeed once they enter college (e.g., Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002). Other studies focus instead on how youth in K-12 settings are prepared for college (e.g., McDonough, 2005). Implementing a college-going culture (CGC) is one way schools prepare students for college, and is a topic that continues to garner much attention.

There are various definitions of a CGC, although, in general, a CGC builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students—not just those considered the best students (College Board, 2006; Oakes, 2003). Still, most of the CGC literature has focused primarily on traditional school settings, despite the growth of charter schools and recent research highlighting the trajectory of alternative-program students into college (Malagon & Alvarez, 2010). Alternative schools, whether part of a comprehensive school or operating independently, are not generally thought of as being part of the college-for-all imperative.

Creating a CGC in an alternative program appears contradictory at first glance, yet these newer school settings represent a viable option for students who do not benefit from traditional educational contexts (Leone & Drakeford, 1999; Malagon & Alvarez, 2010). In this chapter, I examine how At-Promise Academy (APA), Westgate Charter High’s (WGCH) in-house alternative program, represents such an option. My research questions ask, How does WGCH structure a college-going culture?, and How is APA a part of the structuring of a college-going
This chapter is organized into two parts. The first describes how WGCH structures a college-going culture. The second section describes how that structure positions APA within the institution. As will be discussed, the analyses in this chapter suggest WGCH structures a CGC in at least two ways. First, structuring academic preparation via CGC in WGCH means requiring a college-preparatory curriculum for all. Second, school personnel structure a CGC through interventions that specifically target students who are academically deficient through the act of “double-blocking” their schedules (i.e., by doubling the time in courses) in order to engage with a college-preparatory curriculum. As regards APA, this approach to structuring a CGC means students who failed to meet WCGH’s expectations were moved into APA to recoup units and focus on high school graduation. Consequently, school personnel structured APA as a default career track for those students (i.e., not a CGC).

Section One: How WGCH Structures CGC

Jeannine, the chief academic officer (CAO) who has led the CMO for 13 years, describes the CMO’s perspective in preparing students academically for college this way:

We actually believe that access to a quality education is a right that all students deserve no matter their zip code. A lot of people ask us because our mission is really to prepare all kids. A lot of people ask us, “why college?” A lot of kids don't want to go to college. Why wouldn't you change that? … [W]e're not saying every kid's gonna go to college, but we are going to try our hardest to make sure that [the] door of opportunity is open. (J. Robles, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014)

In the excerpt above, Jeannine explains that the CMO believes all students deserve a quality education. (She later clarifies what she meant by a college-preparatory curriculum; see next paragraph.) In fact, when she is confronted with others’ beliefs that some students do not “want” to go to college, and she concedes that not all will necessarily go to college, Jeannine maintains
that the CMO’s goal is to make sure that the opportunity is there, regardless of a student’s perceived objective. This is important because by establishing academic preparation exclusively as a college-preparatory one, the school positions those unable to meet this type of readiness as a problem. This “problem,” and APA’s role in solving it, will be discussed extensively in Section Two.

Just as Jeanine describes, structuring a college-preparatory curriculum was, in fact, the primary way WGCH sought to create a CGC. In the following passage, Jeannine explains what is meant by A-G\(^3\) coursework at WCGH, and how it presents a more equitable opportunity for students to pursue a college education than traditional high schools:

So in your typical high school, the [college] entrance criteria, which they call the A-G requirements, it’s basically the baseline coursework that a student needs to have to be eligible for entrance into a California State University [CSU] or a University of California [UC] institution. And many high schools, particularly high schools in urban underserved areas, those A-G courses are set-aside for a select group of students. In our schools, the A-G curriculum is the default curriculum for everyone. So everyone is on an A-G track. (2014)

In addition to clarifying that the A-G curriculum is a college-preparatory curriculum for California state schools, Jeannine highlights that for students in certain urban areas, these courses are typically reserved for an exclusive group of students. She contrasts this with CMO schools, mentioning that, in these schools, the A-G track is the default curriculum for everyone. In contrasting the CMO schools to traditional schools, Jeannine is arguing implicitly that CMO schools—WGCH in this case—represent a solution to the problem of underpreparing students for college (or reserving such preparation for an elite few), and more to the point, they are considered a solution to traditional schools themselves.

\(^3\) A-G refers to the different subject area requirements and the years needed in each subject to be eligible for college admission into the California university system (UCOP, 2015).
Since WGCH largely structured its academic preparation of students via a college-going curriculum for all, students underprepared for the A-G curriculum become a problem. For WCGH, one remedy to that problem was to increase academic intervention. As Jeannine explains:

[W]e’re finding in the early years that kids were getting F’s and becoming credit-deficient because they weren't prepared at a skill level to approach the A-G classes. So we've really ramped up our interventions. (2014)

Initially, when the CMO took over WGCH, Jeannine explains they found that offering A-G coursework created a problem. She argues students were not prepared for the type of skill level A-G coursework required and were inevitably set up for failure. Subsequently, she adds, this led to implementing interventions meant to prepare students for A-G requirements. In this way, students’ credit deficiencies were then understood to be the problem, and the solution was “ramping up” interventions to make students are academically prepared for college.

In a separate interview with Hannah, she, too, explains students’ academic preparation as lacking, and how this has led to heavy investment in interventions:

[O]ver 70 percent of their kids come in with a reading level two or three years behind where it should be. Which means they stopped growing at about a fifth grade, maximum sixth grade level. And we're trying to get them to college-level courses. So the investment right now is very, very heavy on interventions. (2014)

Here, Hannah highlights that because most students do not come into WGCH at an appropriate reading level for A-G coursework, students must be made ready for the courses. In her view, the school’s heavy investment in interventions is, therefore, one way of creating a CGC. Rather than viewing the new curricular structure as privileging a set of students, the school meant to catch all students up to the A-G curriculum. The primary tool for accelerating students’ readiness for the A-G curriculum came in the form of double-blocking, which will be discussed next.

**Interventions to Support a CGC**
In my time at WGCH, I became very familiar with the block schedule into which the students were placed. The adoption of a block schedule, in addition to the double-dosing of certain classes to meet A-G requirements, led to referring to these classes as “double-blocking” (Fieldnotes, October 7, 2014). Double-blocking meant a student’s schedule in any given semester consisted of two math and English classes in order to progress to A-G-eligible classes in normative time, i.e., four years. Because the number of years required in English and math are, respectively, four and three to fulfill A-G college-preparatory coursework, students often had to double up on both English and math classes. Jeannine describes a double-blocking scenario:

So a student will be, for example, a freshman student will be in Algebra I for his or her math class, but will also be in a math-support class that's kind of getting them caught up on the basics that they need in order to perform in their Algebra I classes well. But we don't want to set students up for failure by placing them in classes that they can't…their skill level isn't there. (J. Robles, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014)

If a student’s skill level is not up to par with the A-G courses they offer (in this scenario, Algebra I), Jeannine explains that students are “caught up” by being placed in a separate class to help them learn the basics in order to perform well in Algebra 1.

Although double-blocking was used to structure a CGC at WGCH, not all school personnel believed it to be the right approach. Some personnel questioned the curricular structure’s insistence on a college future, and wondered how, for example, students who want to pursue careers that do not rely on a college education, would fare using this practice. Personnel questioning the approach did not blame students for their past and current academic performances, but rather, questioned the logic of forsaking other learning opportunities in favor of double-blocking core content. For example, when I asked Roman, a mathematics teacher who

4 WGCH used a 4:4 model (also called the “4 by 4,” “accelerated plan,” or “college-like plan”). 4:4 block scheduling is four classes that meet every day for half a year for 75 to 90 minutes (Dexter, Tai, & Sadler, 2006).
5 A double-dose refers to the practice of having students take two classes of the same subject within one quarter/semester, particularly courses in mathematics (Cortes & Goodman, 2014).
Roman explained that although he sees the rationale, the class schedule only makes sense if going to college depends solely on the curriculum; however, when we consider a different perspective (or the “other side”), we can see that students might be more interested in college as a consequence of school-offered electives, such as art classes. His indictment of school personnel for not offering a wider array of courses and extracurricular activities calls into question whether the absence of extracurricular activities and the lack of non-AG courses is more reactive (by insisting everyone should be college-bound) than proactive (anticipating that what prepares a student for college is more than core courses).

The A-G curriculum for all students—in WGCH and APA—and the subsequent interventions and supports instituted to bring students up to this level of coursework, meant all extracurricular programming was forfeited. For instance, sports were optional, and only offered after school. This precluded students who had family responsibilities or were concerned for their safety when leaving school (see Chapter 4) from participating. In addition, all elective courses were converted to college- and career-ready informational courses. This conversion was something Ms. Florence, a long-time mathematics teacher at WGCH, who had newly joined APA, found problematic:
I think we go a little bit overboard preparing students for college. And we've taken away-I have seen all the electives taken away. There's no auto mechanics at [WGCH]. There is hardly any arts. You know. They took away the technology class, which was fantastic. I mean, that was research-based, but the kids need to know how to do research and how to type in MLA style. And how to look at a website and decide whether it's a good website or a bad Web site. That's what I taught for the last three years. They took that away because it's not an A-G requirement. (2014)

Here, Ms. Florence explicitly expresses the A-G requirements are the reason electives were taken away. Viewing this as going “overboard,” Ms. Florence’s points to the real challenge, i.e., that WGCH is being excessively reactive, and possibly harming students by narrowing the curriculum in an effort to create a CGC. In not offering other important classes to students, and by insisting that all students be college-bound—rather than anticipating other ways to prepare students for college—is a cause for concern expressed by Ms. Florence.

The elective courses Ms. Florence references that were being converted to college- and career-ready informational courses are what Hannah, the vice principal at WGCH, explains as “the classes and interventions and supports they need to even get [students] to a point where they can apply with the opportunities presented to them” (H. Leiden, Personal Interview, May 16, 2014). Jeannine explains “the classes and interventions and supports” in more detail below:

[W]e just do a lot of education. We have a college-readiness class, and a career-readiness class at a high school level to really map out for kids and demystify what it looks like to go to college, what the loan process is. Our counselors basically handhold kids through the FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid]. And through the college application process. (2014)

WGCH school personnel structured their A-G curriculum by implementing these college- and career-readiness classes, including double-blocking. Although many agreed with the implementation of interventions to achieve an academic preparation defined as college-preparation, not all school personnel agreed with how it was being achieved. For example, any given course load might consist of “double math…double reading, double English, chemistry,
physics, and biology,” as Roman puts it (R. Greco, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014), which is privileged by those who may already do well with a traditional class model, and which may exclude students who do not benefit from this structure. Further, these college- and career-readiness classes were primarily for WGCH students. That is, walking students through the college-application process and their financial aid applications (Fieldnotes, February 4, 2014) was a priority within WGCH, as, unfortunately, the college-readiness efforts were not used for the in-house, alternative-program students. Yet, in an interview with Mike, the new dean at Charter 1, he affirms that WGCH had indeed created a college culture:

[T]here is definitely a sense of college culture. The kids know that if I do what I'm supposed to do while I'm here and I'm an active participant in my own learning experience here while I'm at [WGCH], I can go to college. There's opportunity for me to go to college. (M. Fox, Personal Interview, December 10, 2013)

In his explanation of what a CGC means to him, Mike explains that students doing what they are required to do provides an opportunity for college preparation (e.g., “I can go to college”), and thus, the school is positioned as a solution to the problem of inequitable academic preparation for college. Mike’s use of the provisional “if”—“if I do what I’m supposed to do”—suggests that those who may not be active participants will find themselves left out of the CGC.

In my role as a participant-observer at WGCH and APA, I saw two conflicting academic-preparation cultures. Within WGCH, the primary goal was to encourage students to attend college, particularly at the midyear point. For instance, after coming back from a school break, there was a noticeable change in the main hallway walls. They now featured inspirational quotes from famous multiethnic public intellectuals and political heroes such as Maya Angelou, Martin Luther King Jr., and Cesar Chavez. Moreover, next to the door of each classroom, a placard stated: “THE ROAD TO COLLEGE STARTS HERE…” (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).
Figure 5.1. Placard Placed Next to the Door of Each Classroom (Fieldnotes, February 27, 2014)

Figure 5.2. Featured Quote of Writer Maya Angelou (Fieldnotes, February 27, 2014)
The placard (Figure 1) communicated that students were on a college path by virtue of attending class. For Hannah, the vice principal of WGCH, students were not only being prepared for college at WGCH but also would soon be on a path to compete for Ivy League universities:

Now that we're at that point where most of our students are graduating A-G, we really have to look at how can we better prepare students. How can we put them in a place not to just apply to the local schools? How can we go Ivy League? And that's happening for a small subset of our kids, maybe a dozen out of the graduating class. But we're not satisfied there. We want to get our kids to a point where they're competitive with private schools on the [south] side that are paying ten thousand, twenty thousand dollars. (Personal Interview, May 8, 2014)

There are two important aspects of Hannah’s commentary. First, her comment is predicated on the idea that students are graduating “A-G” and are, therefore, college-ready. In other words, by virtue of students completing a college-ready curriculum, she feels assured WGCH is in a place to go even further by preparing students beyond local universities. Second, Hannah’s comment
suggests she feels WGCH is doing so well for its students that it can compete with the more affluent, private, “south side” schools that are known for sending students to Ivy League universities. For Hannah, looking ahead to what it means to prepare students academically means going beyond regular college-readiness, and instead, finding better ways to prepare students to compete for Ivy League universities like students attending private secondary schools on the south side. These institutional motives explained the physical midyear changes to the walls and doorways of the school that I had observed.

Between Hannah’s assertion and the visual changes to the school’s main walls, it seemed there was an institutional belief that the goal of graduating college-ready students was met. However, data from the 2013-14 graduating class suggests something else. In the 12th grade class that year, 58.9 percent had completed the A-G curriculum, which reflects the coursework required for the University of California (UC) system and for the California State University (CSU) system (i.e., what Hannah refers to as “local schools”). This meant 40 percent of students were not prepared for local colleges and were being left out of the school’s future plans to become Ivy League competitive. Thus, while structuring a college-going culture by virtue of offering an A-G curriculum, the data suggests that a significant subgroup of students was left out of the school’s vision of “college for all.”

Summary of Section One

In this section, I argue that school personnel set up academic preparation to mean one that was college-preparatory, and positioned traditional schools and students not meeting A-G requirements as a problem. In turn, school personnel at WGCH believed their school to be the solution. Consequently, they implemented a reactive approach to help students complete an A-G curriculum, the primary proxy for how school personnel understand a CGC. This was not,
however, the case for all students, as I will argue in the next section. Not all students were made ready through the college-preparatory curriculum. The students who did not benefit from the new A-G curricular structure were seen as a problem since the school believed it had implemented appropriate interventions to prepare all students. In the next section, I discuss how students were channeled toward APA and thereby were displaced of any potential for a CGC. I argue this dynamic reflects the consequences of taking a reactive approach to creating a CGC within WGCH. In the Discussion section, I then discuss the particular missed opportunities that would have otherwise created a proactive approach by utilizing APA to achieve a CGC for students at WGCH.

Section Two: CGC Not for All

In contrast to the heightened attention to college-readiness in WGCH at large, my experience within APA was markedly different. For example, in APA, the number of courses a student completed was updated on a daily basis and visually displayed for all to see. Coursework completion was meant to reflect a great accomplishment in that space, and Yesenia, the hybrid alternative’s office assistant, was responsible for updating the mini-whiteboard. Each morning she came in early to print student progress reports that reflected the current number of classes completed by students on the previous day (in Figure 5.4, see “A” for the location of the mini-whiteboard and “B” for Yesenia’s desk location; Fieldnotes, October 16, 2013). In addition to the daily visual display of each completed course, students also received a certificate of completion and the advisory teachers were expected to call each student’s parents to update them of their accomplishment.
Further, the number of students meeting graduation requirements (i.e., completing all A-G requirements) was quickly and publicly celebrated by updating a separate mini-whiteboard entitled “Total Grads,” and the students were asked to wear graduation attire and to take a celebratory lap around the space while ringing a bell (Fieldnotes, October 22, 2013). Yesenia updated this milestone reporting at the request of Ms. Palm, the counselor and students’ advisory teacher. The “Total Grads” mini-whiteboard was also located along the same wall where each course completion board was located. In addition, next to these mini-whiteboards, attendance and punctuality was monitored through timecards. Timecards were located next to a stamp clock and students were required to punch in and out each day (Fieldnotes, October 16, 2013).

I detail my experiences with these visual, and sometimes public, displays of types of academic success celebrated at WGCH and APA to illustrate what often felt like two distinct school cultures. This is important because, as will be discussed, how WGCH structured its
college-going culture had direct implications for how APA (and the students enrolled in it) was positioned apart from that culture. Not all students were included in WGCH’s CGC. For instance, those who were not progressing as expected in WGCH were sent to APA. Students in APA were consequently seen as not taking advantage of the opportunity to go to college. In the following passage, Mike explains how students who have trouble focusing and disrupt the learning process in WGCH are dealt with:

[B]asically what ends up happening is they become a disruption to their own learning process and those around them…And sometimes it comes down to where we have to talk to parents and say I just don't think this environment with the academic rigor that's expected is the best for your student. They don't think it's the best for them either. We need you to help us help them because they want to go to school. It's just this format doesn't work. So that's where they'll look. If we can, we'll in-house them into APA. (2013)

Here, Mike illustrates how his belief that the academic rigor of the college-preparatory curriculum might not benefit some students (and those around them) and results in suggesting that they be moved into APA. Thus, failing at WGCH meant students were displaced from the CGC and transferred into APA. Though that is arguably the expected role of an alternative education program within a school, i.e., that they safeguard students against being completely pushed out of the schooling system, it is not different from what traditional public schools provide. Thus, given that schools of choice represent a solution to the practices of traditional public schools—that they recreate similar practices—does not live up to the promise of these choice institutions.

Other times, students were opting to leave WGCH altogether in order to complete their high school degrees within standard amounts of time. Since creating a CGC meant focusing on getting students out of high school having met A-G coursework, when that was not possible, or if
any student received a “C” or worse grade for any given class, the student could be found spending an extra year or two at WGCH. In conversations with school personnel (M. Espinoza, ELL/English Teacher, Personal Interview, February 5, 2014), I found that this was especially true for most ELLs, who often required more interventions. In an interview with Jeannine, she describes how adding an extra year represents a challenge:

It's a battle [LAUGHS]. I'm laughing because we just had this conversation with a school last week where they were saying, you know, kids are starting to leave in their junior or senior year [at WGCH] because they know they can graduate on time without issue and collect less credits if they go to the local high school. It's a constant battle. There's no easy answer. (J. Robles, Personal Interview, June 2, 2014)

Due to the A-G college curriculum requirement, students at WGCH, unlike those in neighboring traditional schools, needed more credits for graduation. However, some students found that completing high school within a standard timeframe would only be possible if they switched to a traditional school. In this way, students who were discouraged by the need to stay an extra year chose to forego completion of the college-preparatory curriculum and a CGC, in general. As a result, not all students were prepared or part of the CGC at WGCH, but rather, as discussed, those students who did not benefit from this structure became a problem for the implementation of a CGC. As a result, they were primarily sent to APA to recover credits. Yet, some, mostly those students who had the required units, opted to go to other schools to graduate within a standard timeframe (i.e., four years).

**CGC is Not For All: Restricted Ability to Support Student Goals**

As I observed students at WGCH and APA over the year, it was not uncommon to engage in discussions of college. Often, when students asked who I was and what I was doing there, I explained my role as a graduate student at my university and described my dissertation

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6 In addition to meeting the different subject area requirements, including years needed in each subject to be eligible for college admission, A-G college preparatory coursework must be passed with a grade of “C” or better (UCOP, 2015).
research as a culminating project (Fieldnotes, November 11, 2013). In fact, I built rapport with many students by talking about my own background, which included my college trajectory (Fieldnotes, October 16, 2013). These talks often led to discussions about community college (where my postsecondary education began) and transferring, or the differences between degrees afforded at each institution I attended. (I have been a student at both university systems in California.) I was not surprised that many of them had these questions, as I knew from school personnel interviews and from the students themselves that most would be first-generation college students (Jennie, October 31, 2013; Paco, February 14, 2014). Moreover, these talks suggested that students were interested in knowing more about college options. Thus, I wondered how some students knew so little about college, considering that the school, including APA, required an A-G curriculum and considered itself as having instituted a CGC.

Over the course of the year at WGCH, I learned that despite being required to take an A-G curriculum, many of the APA students I interviewed had only a general idea about college. For example, after discussing their postsecondary goals, I surveyed focus group participants on their college knowledge by asking them general college admission questions, such as the differences between various higher education institutions, financial aid, and so forth (see Appendix X for the complete list of survey questions). Only two of the thirteen students who participated in the focus groups listed A-G coursework as an admission requirement for university attendance. Although students knew there was a difference between community college and university admissions, none of the students differentiated between UC and CSU college admission requirements when I asked what was needed to enroll in each university (Fieldnotes, January 9, 2014).  

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7 For example, UCs often require answering two essay prompts; CSU’s minimum GPA eligibility is a 2.0 (vs. a 3.0 for UCs); and extracurricular activities are important for UC admission eligibility (UCOP, 2015).
There seemed to be a mismatch between APA and WGCH in terms of instituting a CGC, seen most vividly through the words of students in APA. For instance, APA was designed to “educate and graduate at-risk and disengaged students,” which does not in itself suggest a college-preparatory trajectory as, for example, WGCH’s mission to have all students college-ready, as Hannah described earlier (Section 1). Despite not having an explicit college-readiness objective, students in APA were required to complete the A-G curriculum just like their WGCH counterparts. Unlike their counterparts, however, APA students would use Top Learning, a third-party online software platform. In interviews with APA students, I asked each whether they felt their college goals were supported in the program, and most expressed that they were supported to graduate but not to go to college. In the following paragraphs, I highlight four students who represent the range of responses: Ashley, Iris, Lalis, and Paco. I argue that academic preparation in APA meant high school graduation, and though this meant A-G completion, it was not about preparing them for college—i.e., instituting a CGC.

Through Ashley’s interview (Personal Interview, January 9, 2014), I learn that she previously attended one other CMO-led, college-preparatory charter school that proved academically overwhelming to her. As a result, she failed many classes in the 9th grade and became credit-deficient. During the interview, I asked her to tell me her plans after high school, and she explained that she was interested in attending Cal State Monterey Bay in Northern California. She continued by stating that she was nervous about leaving home because she would miss her parents. As I probed further, she admitted that she might start off at a local community college because she could not see herself leaving home. Although she was unable to tell me what she planned to major in while in college or what career to pursue, I asked if she felt supported by
the school in her goal to go away to college or possibly start at a local community college.

Ashley’s response was the following:

Well, I don't really feel like I'm supported. But I feel like they help you but I don't feel like I have the support from them… I mean, they just tell you to do this and that but I mean, like they don't—. I feel like when you're doing it, they're not there to help you and they don't motivate you to do it and stuff like that. (2014)

Ashley realized that she was asked to “do it,” i.e., go to college, but did not feel that anyone was there to support her with the task. Striking in her explanation of whether she felt supported to go to college was her differentiation between help and support (“I feel like they help you but I don't feel like I have the support from them”). A CGC is arguably about offering support through the college-preparatory phase; the process of becoming college eligible itself is not necessarily college support. That Ashley signaled that she got help but not support implies that though she may have been getting college-ready assistance with course requirements, she lacked the support to apply or even consider actually going to college. Instead, she was getting help to graduate from high school.

In an interview with Iris (Personal Interview, December 16, 2013), she admitted that in the past not attending school had caused her to fail classes, and as a result she was referred to enroll in APA. As she recalls:

They called me out of class with a few other students. I was in [online] class. And they called us out and told us. They gave us our paper and it showed us how many credits we had and how many we were supposed to recover. And how many we need to graduate. And they said, they told us, oh, there is this other school still in the [WGCH] campus that you can go to- to recover your credits. And you can take more than—well, you can't take more than five classes at a time but you can do five classes in a semester. That's the minimum you can do. But you can do more. And they told us that we would have a meeting with our parents and Ms. [Palm] and we went to the meeting and she told us everything about [APA].

In this excerpt, Iris describes how APA was described as another school within WGCH where she could recover credits and graduate. This largely reiterates what Mike argued earlier about
“housing them,” referring to students on the margins of WGCH’s CGC being transitioned to APA. Iris admitted in the interview that she liked APA because it was allowing her to complete her credits, notably, so she could “go to college”:

My progress here has grown, like a lot. Because I know that if I was in a regular school, I wouldn't be done with as many classes as I am right now. Like, I wouldn't have recovered all these classes. And I don't know, I just want to graduate and go to college.

I ask her about her goals to become a marine biologist and how that goal was being supported and she replied,

I don't really know. Because I haven't really heard anything about, like, college here. Well yeah, basically that they want you to graduate and go to college but haven't really seen them try to help us with that. They just want us to pass our classes. So yeah.

Through her responses, Iris was better able to clearly articulate that the expectation was that she graduate from high school, regardless of her own stated desire to go to college. For students like Iris, the goal is to “recover” credits as quickly as possible without due attention to her future college or career aspirations. Unlike the interventions Jeannine mentioned (Section 1) that supported WGCH students in the college-application process, students in APA did not receive similar support despite having college aspirations. This, I argue, is due to APA’s role in WGCH as the place where the students perceived as unsuccessful with the A-G curriculum (i.e., unsuccessful in the CGC) were sent.

In an interview with Lalis, she explained to me that people in APA “say it’s not a realistic job…it’s not something you want to do forever” about her goal to become a mortician (Personal Interview, October 31, 2013). Though Lalis felt that the adults in her immediate school setting were discouraging, she had a clear career in mind, and even plans to start in an internship right after high school at a local hospital. Ultimately, however, Lalis was unable to specify or deny whether the school was supportive of her career choice. The general sense in APA was about
high school completion, and little if any attention was given to whether students were interested in college or had careers that could potentially be mapped onto majors in college. For instance, when I asked Lalish if she has considered going to college and major in something like forensic science given her interests, she was surprised that this field was a major. The main purpose of APA was about getting students to finish; where they went afterward was given little thought.

Enrique was one of the students who graduated from APA during the academic year I observed at WGCH and APA. He was an aspiring professional basketball player and had attended WGCH due to its basketball team (Fieldnotes, December 17, 2013). During our interview, I asked him if he felt supported at APA in his postsecondary goals to start at a community college and pursue a professional basketball career. After he described Ms. Palm as being helpful, he went on to state what might actually affect one’s ability to get the support they needed:

If they like you, they'll help you. And some teachers want you to beg. I feel like a begging thing shouldn't be a part of teacher. You should-. If that kid is, if he feels like he should beg you or feel like-. It should be up to the student. If he feels like he should beg you, well let him beg. It's kind of an embarrassment. But if he feels like he doesn't need to beg, if he feel like he's solid, straight direct with you, let him be direct with you. But most likely nowadays teachers is like if they don't like you, they're not gonna help you. If you're just not that student that you like, they're just not gonna help you…But she's not that type of person, going back to [Ms. Palm]. She'll let you know. She's real helpful. I think by her being helpful, she's helping my goals. I'm trying to get up out of here. She's like, you want to get up out of here, I'm willing to help you. (Personal Interview, December 16, 2013)

Enrique began by explaining that Ms. Palm helps students out a lot, and that he specifically felt that she had been helpful in his goal to “get up out of here,” meaning APA. Enrique also spends some time explaining the idea that some school personnel, including teachers, only seemed to help you if they like you (e.g., “If they like you, they'll help you”). Though Enrique did feel his goals were being supported, he was unable to explain how they were supported beyond Ms. Palm
helping him “get up out” of APA, i.e., or completing the required units to graduate. In detailing his experience, Enrique revealed that, at times, getting the support or help necessary had more to do with the interpersonal relationships between students and school personnel, suggesting that some students, like him, were able to activate this college or career help while others are not.

Through the student interviews, I learned that the mismatch of college-going cultures in these two settings (WGCH vs. APA) meant students in APA did not feel particularly supported in realizing their aspirations for college. In addition to the student interviews, I next offer a specific student case in which I chronicle the experiences of Nick and his mother in order to illustrate and argue how APA is structured in relation to the CGC at WGCH.

**Background of Nick’s Case.** Ms. Palm, an APA counselor, was responsible for letting students know whether they had completed all of their graduation requirements, and assisted them in preparing pertinent documents each academic year so that students could participate in high school graduations ceremonies. In my observations of her, she rarely focused on college in her interactions, but instead, highlighted an important part of her job, which was informing students about what was needed in order for them to graduate from high school. She updated transcripts and met with parents and students to resolve re/enrollment procedures. For example, some of the concerns she dealt with regularly (and that I observed over the year) revolved around explanations about student progress. At times, she assisted parents by enrolling their students in more “appropriate educational facilities” if they were not progressing adequately within APA (Fieldnotes, May 27, 2014).

**Nick’s Case.** When shadowing Ms. Palm one day, I observed her interactions with Nick (an APA program student) and his mother during a year-end parent-teacher conference. The following case was indicative of the mismatch between APA and WGCH in terms of instituting a
CGC. Nick’s experience was similar to many other interactions of other students I observed. The following excerpt is from Nick’s mother, who had come in to discuss Nick’s academic progress, and what, if anything, he still needed to do to complete his high school requirements:

[Ms. Palm] says she will pull up his [Nick’s] transcripts while his biology teacher [Ms. Brown] prints out his progress on the computer. The mother responds that she has the transcript, and Ms. Palm asks to see it. She [Nick’s mom] explained that he had 195 credits, and asked Ms. Palm for confirmation. Ms. Palm declined to confirm or deny until she pulled up his records. Ms. Palm asked whether she knew the graduation unit requirement of 240, and Nick’s mother said you mean 135? When did it change? Ms. Palm replies that it has always been 240. Nick’s mom replies that she “looked up the information on [local district’s Web site]…” Nick’s mother then asserts in a louder voice, “What’s the latest information because the latest information they had [online] was from 2010-2011…” (Fieldnotes, May 27, 2014)

In this exchange, Nick’s mother believed her son had completed the entire unit requirements established by the district for graduation. What she did not realize was that although the school was technically under district purview (this is the case for WGCH), the school operated under CMO policy. This policy required all students to complete an A-G college-preparatory course sequence. In the following excerpt, Ms. Palm attempted to explain it this way:

Ms. Palm interrupts her, and said “Well [the CMO] is not part of [the district], [the CMO] has their own graduation requirements which is separate from [the district], [the CMO] graduation requirement since 2010 has been 240, and because of the allotment of classes that they offer the students throughout the school day, they offer a maximum of 4 classes per semester, 5 unit each class, three times a year for four years puts them at 280, so even if they fail some classes they can get to 240 units.” (Fieldnotes, May 27, 2014).

In addition to explaining the unit requirements, Ms. Palm added that if a student were to follow a satisfactory academic trajectory at WGCH, in four years they would complete the units. What Ms. Palm did not acknowledge is that Nick was not on a satisfactory academic trajectory, although she knew any APA student would not be. Though her explanation seemed factual at face value, she assumed Nick would have entered the required A-G sequence of classes at the
appropriate level and fulfilled the college-required coursework in four years, an uncommon scenario at WGCH, and definitely not the case with most APA students. Ms. Palm continued by explaining the remaining A-G courses Nick needed to complete:

She [Ms. Palm] said Nick needed “the career class [which] prepares him for college and is an elective as well as a health class, psychology, sociology, any A-G class or language class [are electives].” Since language courses are required for A-G, but certain CMO schools do not offer them, Ms. Palm explains they (the CMO) can only say they are recommended... As a result of this “limitation,” Ms. Palm continues, Nick was only able to take one semester of French and one of Spanish, but it will be counted as a year [of a language other than English] since “some students are on a career track anyway and that’s only an A-G requirement.” Finally, she [Ms. Palm] explained “he (Nick) could come find her about that if there were any problems.” In addition to the elective, Nick’s options are to “pass Algebra 1AB & 2AB in the summer with a C or better, and then he could do Geometry or not because it is only A-G requirement not a state requirement.” (Fieldnotes, May 27, 2014)

In addition to explaining Nick’s incomplete courses, Ms. Palm added that because some of the schools the CMO manages do not offer the college curriculum requirement of a year of another language, Nick could waive that requirement for graduation, adding that some students, like Nick, were on a career track anyway, and did not need it for college enrollment. What is implicit in Ms. Palm’s comment is that Nick would not be going to college.

Throughout the excerpt, Ms. Palm tried to inform Nick’s mother of the differences in the required coursework between the CMO and the district, and the district and the State, as well as what options there were for Nick in terms of both A-G high school completion and non-A-G high school completion, suggesting that, at times, that the CMO required a college-ready curriculum, and at other times, suggesting that he was on a “career” track, and did not need to complete the A-G requirements. For example, at one point Ms. Palm offered to waive a requirement and suggested it was the CMO’s fault for not offering certain classes. This scenario exemplified the role of APA at WGCH that excluded the CGC’s intended goal of preparing all students for college, not high school graduation.
Through this interaction, despite the CMO’s and the school’s requirement to complete an A-G college-preparatory course sequence, Ms. Palm demonstrated that this was less a priority for students on “career tracks,” i.e., in APA. Nick’s case is an example of the individual and institutional challenges arising as a result of implementing a college-for-all curriculum.

In an interview with Nick (Personal Interview, January 23rd, 2014), he had just turned 18, and, like others whom I interviewed, he expressed his desire to obtain a high school diploma. Aside from attending APA, he was interested in completing math classes at a well-known, local youth center. He said he knew he could not “learn math from himself,” referring to the online curriculum students at APA are required to take without any scaffolding interventions like those offered in WGCH. During an interview with Nick, he described his mother as still heavily involved in his educational trajectory.

The varied schooling experiences of students within APA were startling. Students in APA overwhelmingly described not feeling supported to go to college, as reflected in the words of Ashley, Iris, and Lalis, above. Students’ perspectives, taken together with my own observations and conversations with school personnel in APA, suggest that APA is positioned as a kind of “back door” of the CGC associated with WGCH, through which those students perceived as unsuccessful with the A-G curriculum would pass. The de facto role APA played, therefore, was to assist students of the WGCH to graduate from high school by—as the parent corporation asserts—assisting students to recoup units. Assuring high school graduation (even with an A-G curriculum) is decidedly different from preparing students for college—i.e., engaging students in a CGC, where other interventions and supports address the college process. Requiring APA students to complete an A-G curriculum online as though it was the same as establishing a CGC is problematic. As I illustrate above, APA students were not readily engaged
in conversations about college, nor did they believe they were being supported in their postsecondary goals of career and college. In instances when they felt they were getting “help,” it was to graduate and leave APA, with little regard as to where students went afterward. These varied schooling experiences evidence the argument that as a participant-observer at this site, I experienced two disparate cultures: one was focused on getting students college-ready, while the other was focused on getting students to graduate from high school.

Summary of Section Two

In this section, I present ways that school personnel, despite their belief that they had created a CGC to prepare all students with a college-preparatory curriculum, exclude some students. I argue that students who did not benefit from the academic structure of an A-G-only curriculum (with interventions and supports) were seen as the actual problem. I discuss how students were then channeled toward APA, where the focus was to graduate students with little regard for their postsecondary goals and aspirations. This reactive approach to displaced students precluded them from any potential for a CGC. Next, I consider the missed opportunities that would otherwise have created a proactive approach, and I discuss how utilizing APA to achieve a CGC for students at WGCH could have been more proactive.

Discussion

In this chapter, I examine how At-Promise Academy (APA), Westgate Charter High’s (WGCH) in-house alternative program, represents a viable option for students who do not benefit from traditional educational settings (Leone & Drakeford, 1999; Malagon & Alvarez, 2010). My first research question asks, How does WGCH structure a college-going culture? I describe the two-part approach WGCH uses as a college-going culture. First, structuring an academic preparation via CGC in WGCH meant requiring a college-preparatory curriculum for all.
Second, school personnel structured a CGC through interventions that specifically targeted students academically deficient through “double-blocking” their schedules (i.e., doubling time in courses) in order to engage with a college-preparatory curriculum. To answer my second research question, How is APA a part of the structuring of a college-going culture at WGCH, if at all? I show how WGCH’s two-part approach to structuring a CGC displaced students who failed to meet WCGH’s expectations to APA, where students were instead prepared to complete high school.

This section takes up the all-too-common narrative that positions for-profits as choice and freedom when, in this case, we see that rather than creating a new practice, WGCH’s approach to instilling a CGC is common among traditional public schools, and therefore, falls short of the promise that choice schools are presumed. In addition, I ask what it means that students who do not benefit from traditional school structures, rather than being afforded more support to reengage in school via career and college aspirations, are instead simply getting technocratic help to graduate.

Focusing on creating a CGC as equal to meeting A-G curriculum meant that students had to double-dose in two subjects to be ready in four to five years. Double-dosing math and English classes was a common practice at WGCH. Yet, little is known about the effectiveness of this in one subject, let alone two subjects (Cortes, Goddman, & Nomi, 2015). For example, though there have been some substantial positive impacts associated with double-dosing algebra, double-dosing other subjects has not been studied. More problematically, the impact of double-dosing two academic subjects is very much unknown. Yet, the process takes a reactive approach to students’ learning (or lack thereof) in that they, and not the schooling practices, are being treated as the problem. As Roman suggests, students who already struggle in the current structure are
now given a double-dose of a narrower, rather than more expansive, curriculum. Though double-dosing may prove effective for some students, it is unclear whether it does so with students who already benefit from normative schooling practices, rather than, for example, more flexible programs. It is also unclear how this practice may further push out students; my study suggests that many students may have been negatively impacted by this practice, particularly in its early years of implementation. More research is needed on the social and academic benefits or detriments of double-dosing two subjects.

There were various missed opportunities for WGCH to offer a true CGC to all students. For example, the lack of a more intentional partnership between APA and WGCH was one missed opportunity, further reflecting what I interpret as reactive programming to the needs of its students. APA became a back door for graduating from high school at WGCH without being prepared for college. APA itself could have been utilized more proactively to offer postsecondary (i.e., college or career) support for students. Finally, I discuss other proactive models of alternative programs and explain the need for holding settings like WGCH’s APA more accountable, particularly given the rise of for-profit schooling.

**Proactive Approaches to College-Going Culture in Alternatives and Schools of Choice**

More and more, alternative programs and schools of choice are serving low-income youth of color, where traditional schools have been labeled as “failing” their students (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, Wang, & Orfield, 2012; Zhang & Cowen, 2009). This growth is predicated upon a market-based reform agenda that positions these schools of choice as a solution to failing schools (Lipman, 2013). Yet, little is known about how these settings are a part of the college-for-all imperative and how they represent a viable option for students who do not benefit from traditional educational contexts. Findings in this chapter point to analogous
issues in implementing a college norm in these alternative schools of choice, similar to those in traditional school settings. For example, though traditional schools are often thought of as being inflexible in accommodating certain students’ academic or behavioral needs within classes, this also seems to be something WGCH struggles with. Though they offer a college-preparatory curriculum (and interventions to meet academic benchmarks), some students were not completing these classes and were consequently sent to the in-house alternative program. Research has previously shown that schools often relegate some students to career or low academic tracks as a de facto practice. At WGCH, I argue that APA was seen as this track and arguably, not even fulfilling the notion of a career track insofar as students’ postsecondary goals were largely irrelevant to their primary objective: assuring high school graduation. Students who did not benefit from the interventions instituted through WGCH were seen as a problem to the goal of the school to institute a college-preparatory curriculum. In addition, though the in-house alternative program required students to complete an A-G curriculum, school personnel neither actively nor explicitly believed APA to be a part of the CGC at WGCH.

Proactive approaches to college-going cultures raise the importance for working collaboratively with community stakeholders, especially families. At WGCH school personnel primarily sought to create a CGC through an A-G curriculum and extra courses that educated students on college preparation. Yet the counselor and teachers had continuous access to parents. Nick’s mother, for example, was heavily involved in his education, and teachers often spoke to students’ parents after each successful course completion. Lacking from the WGCH approach was a proactive inclusion of parent, familial, or community collaboration. Others have found, for instance, the promising role of mentors or college coaches in working directly with students and families. The P-20 collaboration that aims to encourage student college awareness and
attendance through strong administrative leadership between elementary schools, middle schools, secondary schools, and universities seems to be one proactive and empowering avenue to pursue college-going cultures as a school-community effort (McClafferty Jarsky, McDonough, & Nunez, 2009). Rather than setting up students in high school to succeed or fail, or, as Mike suggests, allowing them find themselves left out of the CGC, more preventative approaches focus on creating a CGC with students long-term.

Proactive approaches to school-community collaboration in promoting college-going include research that cautions against institutional expectations for low-income and Latina/o parents to participate in normative ways (Zarate, 2007). For instance, demystifying the process of postsecondary education for the parents themselves is fitting for this population. In particular, the Kellogg Foundation has highlighted two successful partnership programs. First, the ENLACE program uses home visits to provide information about college to families when siblings and parents have not attended themselves. In this way, these college mentors activate familial, social networks that have been shown effective in providing college information within Latino families (Perez & Rodriguez, 2011). Second, Padres Promotores, or parent advocates, utilizes a community health promoter approach, and it represents a proactive approach to tapping into the potential of Latino parent leaders within school-community partnerships (Kellogg Foundation, n.d).

The college-going culture literature conceptualizes the organizational climate (e.g., high expectations) and the opportunity to learn (i.e., A-G curriculum) as paramount in supporting students’ college aspirations. These models have often not yet been extended to alternative (or continuation) programs, but new schooling contexts have the ability to create a college-going culture for students who have been pushed out of traditional schooling options. Typically,
students who excel in traditional school settings are defined as successful and are thought to be college-bound. However, in this study, I find that even those students who did not benefit from the A-G curriculum and interventions continue to seek a high school diploma and postsecondary options (e.g., Ashley, Iris, Lalis, and Enrique). Recently, research has shown that despite low math academic trajectories, Latina students enroll in college (Zaragoza-Petty & Zarate, 2014). The role of these organizations in providing an encouraging climate and promoting a rigorous academic curriculum through a college-going culture is fitting.

Proactive approaches to alternative programs begin with the acknowledgment that school structures are a bad fit for some students. Students who do not benefit from today’s traditional schooling structures should, however, still be provided with academically rigorous and engaging material (Leone, & Drakeford, 1999). In California, continuation programs and alternative programs are separated into two distinct types of institutions, but both lack transparent accountability procedures (see Chapter 3 for more detail; Huerta, Gonzalez, & d'Entremont, 2006). This represents an issue in holding these institutions accountable to ensure the provision of an engaging and rigorous curriculum. One of the arguments against doing so has to do with the array of purposes these alternative programs serve. For instance, though some focus on credit-recovery, others might provide clinical counseling services, and still others may combine these two priorities. Reconciling these disparate types of programs proves challenging in both traditional and charter school contexts. Nonetheless, there are some approaches that aim to be both preventative and proactive.

Gateway to College is an example of an alternative program that allows students to recover high school credits while earning college credit. This means students can still receive a high school diploma. However, it is important to point out that they might be earning only
community college credit, as opposed to UC/CSU college credit. This program is intended to reconnect youth to formal schooling in order for students to also obtain postsecondary degrees. Further, this program represents a proactive approach to instituting a college-going culture among young people who previously have disengaged from formal schooling. In designing and implementing community-wide initiatives, advocating for improved policies, and engaging young people to lead and collaborate with local and national organizations, this program aims to empower youth in their schooling process. In addition, Early/Middle College programs offer similar options for students (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006).
Chapter 6

Discussions on whether Westgate Charter High and At-Promise Academy represent a reactive solution—as opposed to one that is proactive—broadens the debate about the types of practices that will keep students safe and college-ready long-term. In my dissertation, I examine the contexts these new schooling sites manage via national market-based school reform policy that prioritizes safety and college-readiness. I intentionally chose to collect data at WGCH and APA, a for-profit cyber continuation program, for two main reasons. First, WGCH and the for-profit program it houses represent a market-based school reform site I could explore for the new schooling methods being employed. Second, its location within a low-income community of color allowed me to explore a key theme of the study, namely, the role of this site in representing a solution to traditional public schools.

Conducting a critical ethnography with a proactive versus reactive conceptual framework permitted me to consider the reproduction of academic and social at-risk ideologies of youth within a structural context of market-based school reform. In addition, this conceptual framework allowed me to consider how school personnel structure safety and institute a college-for-all culture, and how this reflects a largely reactive institutional response to the needs of their students and community. In Section One, I provide a brief summary of the major findings of the dissertation. In Section Two, I first discuss the ways in which this case suggests new schooling sites and methods both reproduce and worsen the experiences of youth of color, and second, consider reimaging youth and communities of color through school-community partnerships.

Section One: Summary of the Major Findings

Current market-based school reform policy calls for attention to two main areas of schooling: addressing the well-being and safety of students, and preparing students for college.
In addition, market-based school reform positions traditional public schools and students in the low-income communities of color they serve as “unfit.” In comparison, alternative programs and schools of choice are considered as the solution to the problem. The underlying argument for market-driven school reform is that increased freedom of school choice will lead to improved student achievement and social equity (Boyles, 2000; Cookson, 1992; Lubienski, 2008). These claims are predicated upon a reactive approach to traditional public schools, where both the schools and the students are seen as the problem, which largely ignores historical and structural issues of inequity.

The goal of this study is to understand how a for-profit hybrid alternative program housed within a charter school manages these dimensions of national policy and educational concerns, and in what ways they reflect either a proactive or a reactive institutional stance. For this investigation, I asked four fundamental questions (see Table 11). Given the current national attention on achievement gaps and concern for the safety of youth of color, I became interested in the two priorities articulated in national and state policy. I briefly present the findings by research question in Table 11 before turning to the implications of the dissertation (Section Two).

Table 11

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<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<td>1. How do school personnel structure order at WGCH?</td>
<td>School personnel structure order as safety and order as control. This initially leads to suppressing violence and creating order, but fails to address the underlying problem of students’ decisions to affiliate with gangs in the first place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How does the structuring of order address students’ senses of safety?</td>
<td>Ultimately, it fails to address students’ senses of safety. The community context and the</td>
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decision to mainly use law enforcement to regulate interactions contribute to this aspect.

3. How does WGCH structure a college-going culture?

This is accomplished by requiring a college-preparatory curriculum for all, and through interventions that specifically target students determined to be academically deficient by “double-blocking” their schedules (i.e., doubling their time in courses).

4. How is APA a part of the structuring of a college-going culture at WGCH?, if at all

Students who fail to meet WCGH’s expectations are sent to APA, where students are instead prepared to complete high school without a sense of a CGC.

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**Section Two: Implications of the Dissertation**

We must consider how a market-based school reform agenda affects public schooling (Mora & Christianakis, 2011; Wells, 2002). Situating a proactive versus reactive conceptual framework within a broader structural context of at-risk ideologies and market-based school reform allows me to consider the inability of alternative programs and schools of choice as solutions to the schooling experiences of youth of color. When reactive approaches that position youth and communities as the problem go unquestioned, then new schooling sites and methods continue to produce limited understanding of structuring student academic preparation. Simply put, they recreate inequity and further complicate the educational landscape for youth of color. For instance, Nick’s case represents one way the burden of figuring out how the bureaucratic processes work shifts to families and youth.

Although there is still debate over the role of charter schools in providing a more equitable educational system for low-income youth of color, what is true is that these types of school settings will continue to operate and grow in places where traditional public schools are structured to fail. Often, these schools are over-represented in low-income communities of color.
As a result, research, such as the work presented here, should serve to stem the tide, or, at least, guide questions to examine the motives of the so-called “laboratories of educational innovation,” as well as the purposes of such sites. For instance, it is crucial to understand how alternative education programs and schools of choice change the dominant discourse and hegemonic beliefs of students and families, or whether they simply recreate deficit paradigms.

**Critical Ethnography Methodology and Reactive vs. Proactive Approaches Framework**

Conducting a critical ethnography allowed me to consider possibilities within my research site. This was not done in an effort to evaluate these institutions, but rather to understand how they structure what it means to be safe, and how they institute a college-for-all mission. Unfortunately, these two pressing issues in education often become a single factor (e.g., school climate), or two factors (e.g., school context and academic achievement) in statistical analyses. I found that coupled with a proactive versus reactive approach framework, this methodology allowed me to truly consider not only what the issues in addressing school safety and college preparation are but also pose less reactionary and problem-centric findings. I was able to offer counter-narratives and processes to address issues in context, which is another strength of this methodology.

All research questions were motivated by the desire to learn the extent to which new schooling methods innovate, remake, or reproduce practices pertaining to the college preparation and safety of students, spelled out in traditional public school literature. Though the market-based school reform approach is often touted as the only solution to these concerns, successful and innovative programs already exist. Ultimately, the methodology and framework permitted me to address deficit ideologies directly and to discuss known best practices when working with low-income youth of color. Rather than being a complete solution to education issues, alternative
programs and schools of choice struggle with being reactively positioned against traditional
schools and students in market-based school reform and policy, often adopting similar stances
with communities and schools. Instead, in this dissertation, I considered how long-term school-
community partnerships represent proactive approaches to academic programs, as well as the
well-being of youth of color.

**Reimagining Youth and Communities of Color Through School-Community Partnerships**

A main idea across the chapters was building school-community partnerships as
proactive approaches in new schooling sites. Given market-based school reform, we can only
expect the public-private divide to continue to blur. This is both exciting and worrisome. On the
one hand, it is worrisome to imagine institutional responses to an ongoing issue—that of deficit
ideologies—that are reactionary toward communities already struggling with schooling methods
that privilege some at the expense of others. On the other hand, it is exciting that traditional
public schools burdened with context-specific issues may have long-term and community-based
support, even if it means more privatization in the educational sector. What is not an option is to
assume that without concerted effort and criticism, market-based school reform will be unbiased
and equitable for all, one of the main ideas undergirding market-based school reform.

In Chapters 4 (Safety, Order, and Control) and 5 (College for All), I present alternate
explanations for the underperformance of some students, underscoring the fact that the current
mainstream educational structure, guided by high-stakes testing as a way to guarantee school
funding, benefits some students at the expense of others. Rather than assuming the dominant
discourse and hegemonic beliefs about whom which policy designates as “at risk,” I sought to
understand how school personnel themselves make sense of their understanding of students, and
how this structures the decisions they make. This uncovered issues of gang affiliation, racial
tension, two-culture schools, and gender-specific conflict. Additionally, it also shows how reactionary the charter management organization was, at least, at times. These findings have important implications for literature on criminalization (also known as the school-to-prison pipeline) of youth and college-going cultures. Though often not in conversation with each other, criminalization practices and college-going cultures can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. Schools, among other factors, socialize and prepare students for various postsecondary options. What I am suggesting here is that the investment in proactive and long-term structuring of neighborhood safety, coupled with high expectations for schools situated within low-income communities of color, are implicated in socializing students toward empowering options during their secondary school education.
References


*Creating a College Going Culture.* Copyright © 2006. The College Board.

www.collegeboard.org


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*National Education Policy Center.*


*Safe and Civil Schools*. Copyright © 2016 http://www.safeandcivilschools.com


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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Student Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECT

Student Support

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM
Lead Researcher
Alma L Zaragoza-Petty Graduate Student Researcher
School of Education
323) 528-5619 / azaragoz@uci.edu

Faculty Sponsor
Tesha Sengupta-Irving
School of Education
949) 824-2348 / t.s.irving@uci.edu

STUDY LOCATION:
(Removed for confidentiality) High School

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY BEING DONE?
The purpose of this research study is to understand your child’s schooling experiences.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
This study will enroll approximately 50 students. All study procedures will be done at (Removed for Confidentiality) High School in a closed room to ensure privacy.

WHAT PROCEDURES ARE INVOLVED WITH THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL THEY TAKE?
1. Your child is being invited to participate in an interview. Your child may also be asked to participate in a focus group (of 4-6 people per group) at a later time.

2. Participation in the study will take a total of about 2 hours over a period of one semester.

3. Disciplinary and academic performance data will be collected on your child.

Your child must meet the following requirements to be in the study: currently attend (Removed for confidentiality) High school and is 15-17 years old

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OR RISKS RELATED TO THE STUDY?
There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include: mild emotional distress and potential for breach of confidentiality.

ARE THERE BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?
Participant Benefits
Your child will not directly benefit from participation in this study.
Benefits to Others or Society
The possible benefits of this study include learning about ways to improve school support based on the needs of students, parents and school personnel.

WILL I BE PAID FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
Your child will be compensated $15 cash for their participation in this research study.

WHAT HAPPENES IF I WANT TO STOP TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
Your child is free to withdraw from this study at any time. If your child decides to withdraw from this study your child should notify the research team immediately. The research team may also end their participation in this study if they do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

If your child withdraws or is removed from the study, the researcher may ask them to refer other students who may be interested in participating.

HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE KEPT?
Subject Identifiable Data
Identifiable information collected about your child will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and their identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data. Personal identifiers will be retained to consult the findings with your child at the end of the study.

Data Storage
Research data will be maintained in a secure location at UCI. Only authorized individuals will have access to it. Research data will be stored electronically on a laptop computer in an encrypted file and is password protected. The audio will also be stored in a secure location; then transcribed within 1 year of collection and destroyed within 2 years of collection.

Data Retention
The researchers intend to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented and for seven years after all children enrolled in the study reach the age of majority (age 18 in California).

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY STUDY DATA?
The principal investigator, authorized UCI personnel, and regulatory entities such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), may have access to your study records to protect your safety and welfare. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies your child will not be voluntarily released or disclosed by these entities without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Study records provided to authorized, non-UCI entities will not contain identifiable information about your child; nor will any publications and/or presentations without your separate consent. While the research team will make every effort to keep your personal information confidential, it is possible that an unauthorized person might see it. We cannot guarantee total privacy.

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY?
If you or your child have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the research team listed at the top of this form.

Please contact UCI’s Office of Research by phone, (949) 824-6662, by e-mail at IRB@research.uci.edu or at 5171 California Avenue, Suite 150, Irvine, CA 92617, if you or your child is unable to reach the researchers listed at the top of the form and have general questions; have concerns or complaints about the research; have questions about your rights as a research subject; or have general comments or suggestions.

HOW DO I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?
You should not sign this consent form until all of your questions about this study have been answered by a member of the research team listed at the top of this form. You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with UCI or your quality of care at the UCI Medical Center.
_____ Yes, I agree to allow the research team to audio record my child’s interview.
_____ No, I do not agree to allow the research team to audio record my child’s interview.

Your signature below indicates you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about this study.

_I agree to participate in the study._

______________________________
Printed Name of Student

______________________________       __________________
Parent / Guardian Signature       Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Subject / Guardian

______________________________       __________________
Researcher Signature       Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Researcher
Appendix II: Student Information Sheet

University of California, Irvine
Study Information Sheet

Student Support

Lead Researcher
Alma Zaragoza-Petty
Ph.D. Student, Department of Education
Phone: (323) 528-5619; e-mail: azaragoz@uci.edu

Faculty Sponsor
Dr. Tesha Sengupta-Irving
Assistant Professor, Department of Education
Phone: (949) 824-2348; e-mail: t.s.irving@uci.edu

You are invited to participate in a research study that hopes to understand how high students adapt to schooling. You are eligible to participate in the study if you are at least 15 years old, speak/write English or Spanish and attend (Removed for confidentiality) High School.

You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview (which will be later transcribed) that asks about your experiences in high schools, your academic achievement, and the type of support that you perceive you receive and need. The interview will last 45-60 minutes and will be conducted in a closed room in school. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the decision to participate, not to participate, or if you are withdrawn or withdraw from the study will not affect your status with (Removed for confidentiality) High School. You may refuse to participate or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty. You may choose to skip a question or a study procedure. Your decision will not have any impact on your status at (Removed for confidentiality) High School.

You will be paid $15 cash for your participation.

A possible discomfort associated with the study is emotional discomfort. There is a potential breach for confidentiality, as private identifiable information is collected about you. There are no direct benefits from participation in the study. However, the results of the study may help educators understand how different types of students adapt to college life.

All research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially in a locked file cabinet. All identifiable information that is collected about you will be kept confidential. Your name and other contact information will be stored separately from the data. A pseudonym will be used in reports or publications from this study.

The research team and authorized UCI personnel may have access to your study records to protect your safety and welfare. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed by these entities without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the researchers listed at the top of this form. If you are unable to reach the researchers and have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact UCI’s Office of Research by phone, (949) 824-6662, by e-mail at IRB@research.uci.edu or at 5171 California Avenue, Suite 150, Irvine, CA.
**Appendix III: Student Demographic Information Sheet**

**Demographic Face Sheet for Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BASIC INFO</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Date: _________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Name: _______________ <em>(collected during recruitment)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: _____________________________ <em>(collected during recruitment)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Code and Pseudonym: _____________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your ethnicity and/or race: _______________ Gender: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in this school ((Removed for confidentiality) High): ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your grade level: ____________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other schools have you attended since starting high school? ______________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you Bilingual? Language(s): __________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s/Guardian’s Occupations: Mother: ______ Father: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s/Guardian’s Place of Birth: Mother: ______ Father: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Place of Birth: ____________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Residence: ____________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>REFERRALS</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you know another student that might be interested in participating in this study? If so, please provide the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name: _______________ Name: _______________ Name: _______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone #: _______________ Phone #: _______________ Phone #: _______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV: Student Interview Protocol

Student Interview Protocol

Intro
Outline the interview process, review the consent form and check for understanding/questions.

Background- start with info on the schools attended
1. What was your “home” school or what other schools have you attended before AP/(Removed for confidentiality)?
2. Is (Removed for confidentiality) the first charter school you have attended? How does this school (or AP) different than other schools you’ve attended?
3. Tell me a little bit about why you are coming to this school. Who decided you should come here? How did you find out about it and enroll?
4. Were your parents involved in your decision to come here? What did your parents/guardians think about your decision to come to this school?
5. How would you describe your experiences in school? What are some things you like about (Removed for confidentiality)/AP? Dislike? How does it compare to other schools you’ve attended?
6. Are you planning to go back to your “home” school/(Removed for confidentiality)/another regular school?
7. Have you or your parents heard anything about (Removed for confidentiality)/AP before coming here? Did your guardians attend (Removed for confidentiality)? What were some things you have heard about the old (Removed for confidentiality)?
8. Who do you consider part of your community? Has this “community” changed since CMO took over (Removed for confidentiality)?

Perspectives on formal schooling/education
9. What are your goals while you are in school? What do you hope to accomplish?
10. How does AP/(Removed for confidentiality) support your goals? In what ways does it not support your goals? What else does this school/program need to offer to help meet your needs?
11. Let’s talk about your experiences with staff at AP/(Removed for confidentiality). Have you had any experiences with security officers? Police/cops? Teachers? Counselors? Administrators?

Perspectives on terms used for understanding students and managing resources in schools
12. What does it mean to do well in school to you? To not do well in school?
13. How would you define yourself as a student? What words would you use to explain to a friend the type of student you are? What words have you used to identify yourself or friends in school?
14. Have you heard others identify you using a specific word in any school you’ve attended? What do you think you or others use terms to identify students?
15. Would you say you do well in school? Why or why not? What makes you feel/think that way about yourself?
16. Do you think it is important to identify students who do well or not well in school? Who do you feel should get to define the type of student you are?

Perspectives on the managing of resources and student based on “at risk” ideologies
18. Have you ever heard of the term “at risk” used to describe students in schools? If so, where have you heard this word used? If not, what do you think this word mean to you?
19. What other terms like “at risk” have you heard? Who was it used on? What do you think about people being described this way?
20. In your opinion, what makes a student at risk (if participant uses “at risk”)? Or, do student labels influence your experience? What or who can help change these factors?
21. Does you think this term (at risk) influence your experience in school? How?

Closure
22. Is there anything else you would like to share or add?
Appendix V: College, Career, and Community Focus Group Interview and Survey

1. Think about who and/or what you consider part of your community.

2. What is it like to live in and/or go to school in the community you thought of?

3. What are some things you like and what are some things you don't like about your community? Why?

4. What would make your community stronger or better? Why?

5. What places or people in your community feel safe to you? Where do you not feel safe?

6. How is Your school involved in your community?

7. What are your goals after high school?

8. How does this school assist you in your future goals/options?

Name: ________________________

What do you need to enroll in community college?

What do you need to enroll in a university?

What is the difference between community college and a university?

How do you get classes once you are in college/university?

What is financial aid?

What do you do to get a job?
Appendix VI: Consent Information Form for School-Personnel

University of California, Irvine
School-Personnel Study Information Sheet

Student Support

Lead Researcher
Alma Zaragoza-Petty
Ph.D. Student, Department of Education
Phone: (323) 528-5619; e-mail: azaragoz@uci.edu

Faculty Sponsor
Dr. Tesha Sengupta-Irving
Assistant Professor, Department of Education
Phone: (949) 824-2348; e-mail: t.s.irving@uci.edu

You are invited to participate in a research study that hopes to understand how school personnel understand schooling. You are eligible to participate in the study if you are at least 18 years old, speak/write English or Spanish and work at (Removed for confidentiality) High School as a teacher, administrator or staff.

You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview (which will later be transcribed) that asks about your experiences at work, your background, and the type of support and resources that you perceive students receive. The interview will last 45-60 minutes and will be conducted in a closed room in school.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the decision to participate, not to participate, or if you are withdrawn or withdraw from the study will not affect your status with (Removed for confidentiality) High School. You may refuse to participate or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty. You may choose to skip a question or a study procedure. Your decision will not have any impact on your status at (Removed for confidentiality) High School.

There is no cost to you for participating and you will not be paid for your participation.

A possible discomfort associated with the study is emotional discomfort. There is a potential breach for confidentiality, as private identifiable information is collected about you. There are no direct benefits from participation in the study. However, the results of the study may help educators understand how different types of students adapt to schooling.

All research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially in a locked file cabinet. All identifiable information that is collected about you will be kept confidential. Your name and other contact information will be stored separately from the data. A pseudonym will be used in reports or publications from this study.

The research team and authorized UCI personnel may have access to your study records to protect your safety and welfare. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed by these entities without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the researchers listed at the top of this form. If you are unable to reach the researchers and have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact UCI’s Office of Research by phone, (949) 824-6662, by e-mail at IRB@research.uci.edu or at 5171 California Avenue, Suite 150, Irvine, CA.
Appendix VII: School-Personnel Demographic Information Sheet

**Demographic Face Sheet for School Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC INFO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Date: _________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your position at this school? □ Teacher □ Counselor □ Administrator □ School security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ School Police □ Other: _________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Staff Name: _________________ (collected during recruitment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: _____________________________ (collected during recruitment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Code and Pseudonym: __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your ethnicity and/or race (optional): ________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many years have you worked in schools: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many years in this school (Beach High): ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your role at the school? ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other schools have you worked in? ______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the highest degree obtained/type of credential you hold? __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you bilingual? Language(s): ______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Place of Birth: ____________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Residence: ______________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERRALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you know other staff that might be interested in participating in this study? If so, please provide the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name: ______________ Name: ______________ Name: ______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone #: ______________ Phone #: ______________ Phone #: ______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VIII: School-Personnel Interview Protocol

**School Personnel Interview Protocol**

**Intro**
Introduce myself after providing study information sheet and outline the interview format/process.

**Background**
1. (Have school personnel fill out demographic face sheet; take fieldnotes)
2. Tell me a little bit about your work here at the school. What’s a typical day like?

**Perspectives on formal schooling/education**
3. Why did you decide to work in schools? This school?
4. How would you describe (your perspective on) the purpose of formal schooling/education?
5. Do you think schools incentivize you to meet that goal? Why or why not?
6. What do you see as your role and responsibility in this process?

**Perspectives on terms used for understanding students and managing resources in schools**
7. What does it mean to do well in school? Not do well in school?
8. How do you describe students who do well in school? Who do not do well in school?
9. What experience informs your beliefs on what it means to do well/not well in school? Or why do you think that you what you believe? When/where did you develop this understanding?
10. Do you think it is important to identify students who do not do well in school? How do schools identify students? How do you identify such students? How do you identify this school?
11. How would you characterize these students? What characteristics would you say describe these students?
12. Have you encountered a student or students in your setting whom you were concerned about? Why were you concerned? How did you support these students? –specific example/probe
13. What resources do schools offer these students? What resources are missing in supporting these students? What would you change, if anything, in the way students are supported with school resources?

**Perspectives on the managing of resources and student based on “at risk” ideologies**
14. Have you ever heard of the term “at risk” in relation to students and their performance in schools? If so, where have you heard this word used? What does this word mean to you? If not, what terms have you heard used in relation to students and their school performance?
15. Are there other terms different or alike to “at risk”?
16. How would you say this/these term(s) influences the experiences of students? How does it influence the purpose of formal schooling/education?
17. In your opinion, what makes a student “at risk” (if participant uses “at risk”)? Or, not do well in schools? Where does it stem from? How can help these factors change? What is the role of schools in changing these factors? What do schools do to change these factors?

**Closure**
18. Is there anything else you would like to share or add?
APPENDIX VIX: Analysis of Observation Fieldnotes

*Iterations of Analysis of Observational Data: Code Development based on Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Iteration: Typologies/Subject Level Content Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Observation data while collecting data)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Program staff try to create community                      |
| Discussion and updates on student’s progress among staff;   |
| Safety talk                                                |
| Discipline/appropriate behavior monitoring                 |
| Self-medication and other staff beliefs and actions        |
| and students                                               |
| Characteristics of teachers                                |
| Physical appearance of the school site                     |
| Physical aspect of surveillance; gates, locks               |
| Seating arrangements                                        |
| Graduation requirements missed for students; academic      |
| tracking                                                    |
| Video surveillance during fights                            |
| Management of all student behavior                          |
| Gang reduction program                                     |
| Understanding the role of student incentives and distractions |
| Comparison of students across programs (incarcerated youth as best comparison) |
| Connecting with students before reprimanding                |
| Schedule/Program overview                                   |
| College Ready                                              |
| Holiday celebrations                                        |
| Goals for students                                         |
| Students moving, family characteristics                    |
| Student issues, struggles and coping strategies             |
| Student updates on progress/work/classes                   |
| Student updates on life                                    |
| Social interactions among students                          |
| Student attendance                                         |
| Students graduating                                        |
| Rapport building with students and rapport building with researcher|
| Role as researcher, mediator, advisor                      |
| Negotiating site based on gender roles, identity           |
| Life-sharing as rapport building strategy                  |
| Positioning knowledge/lack of subject knowledge            |
| The surveillance of teacher behavior through awards/lack of awards |
| Teachers under review/surveillance                         |
| Teacher support through school chant?                      |
| Staff meeting with teacher updates as control strategy     |
| Constant program changes                                   |
| Staff interview and opinions to create community among staff|

| Second Iteration: Themes by Assigned Categorical Value     |
| (Observation data after collecting all data)               |

<p>| Student Policing/Surveillance Strategies                   |
| Uniforms different from others                             |
| Video surveillance                                         |
| Phone/music permission                                     |
| Grads/classes completed on board                           |
| Padlock to prevent leaving                                 |
| Metal detectors                                            |
| Progress tracking                                          |
| Disciplinary tracking                                      |
| Clocking in/out                                            |
| Incentive System                                           |
| Gold ticket economy (food/music)                           |
| Summer enrollment earned                                   |
| Increases before breaks                                   |
| Neighborhood Context                                       |
| Gangs affiliated with projects                             |
| Safety concerns/talk                                       |
| Job opportunities at “Latino Square”                       |
| Navigating Role as Researcher                              |
| As a limited in knowledge teacher                          |
| With access to unlocking quizzes                           |
| “Being useful”                                             |
| Sharing personal background as rapport building strategy with students |
| Lack of rapport with some students                         |
| Rapport building with staff                                |
| Favorite “teacher”                                         |
| Continuous rapport building with absent/new student        |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School gate camera</th>
<th>Shootings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locked restrooms</td>
<td>Alumni talk about the Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera buzz-in system by main office</td>
<td>Prostitute hangouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff</td>
<td>Daughter beat-up for stealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang reduction program &amp; community</td>
<td>Middle school gang involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhancement</td>
<td>Violence experienced pre-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling for foster youth</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity class (Zumba)</td>
<td>Hit and run on skateboarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban league program</td>
<td>student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student jumped for phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Socializing/Distractions</td>
<td>Students not connected to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking/Arguing/Rumors</td>
<td>physical surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phones (instagram, snapchat)</td>
<td>Teachers warn about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracking the internet (for answers)</td>
<td>neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging out in the foyer/hallway</td>
<td>Parking in gated lot inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging outside school gate</td>
<td>school</td>
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<td>Sharing personal stories with me</td>
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<td>Under the influence</td>
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<td>Daytime parties</td>
<td>Bullet-proof counters at</td>
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<td></td>
<td>stores/restaurants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Candy/chip home stands</td>
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<td>Clothes stands</td>
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<td>Neighborhood Surveillance</td>
<td>Shootings</td>
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<td>Older people hang out by bus</td>
<td>Alumni talk about the Charter</td>
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<td>stops/burger joint near school</td>
<td>Prostitute hangouts</td>
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<td>Cop cars parked by school</td>
<td>Daughter beat-up for stealing</td>
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<td>Money</td>
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<td>Fruta (fruit) man</td>
<td>Middle school gang involvement</td>
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<td>School gate camera</td>
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<td>Ex-student arrested in front of</td>
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<td>school (intent to sell)</td>
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<td>engagement views</td>
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<td>Structure of Program</td>
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<td>Entrance requirements vary</td>
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<tr>
<td>40% of students on IAP</td>
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<td>Correctional facility as progress</td>
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<td>2-3 classes assigned on software</td>
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<td>Lesson/Curriculum Structure</td>
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<td>Study guides/worksheets</td>
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<td>Session quizzes</td>
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<td>Mix of easy/hard classes</td>
<td>Final session test</td>
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<td>Study guides/worksheets</td>
<td>English requires essays</td>
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<td>Session quizzes</td>
<td>Staff Policing/Surveillance Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final session test</td>
<td>Based on student progress statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>English requires essays</td>
<td>Liaison check-ups</td>
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<td>Mediator for student issues</td>
<td>Gift cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering student family details</td>
<td>Asked to give each other kudos by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commended for getting to know</td>
<td>VP/list accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>Asked to not make excuses/be</td>
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<td>Gender issues in building rapport with</td>
<td>solution-oriented</td>
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<td>male administration, CSO’s, and male</td>
<td>staff Perceptions on Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>student</td>
<td>Perceived lack of control on student</td>
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<td>Fist bumps, hugs, and greetings</td>
<td>(acting crazy/weird)</td>
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<td>Advise students not to leave but don’t</td>
<td>Disagreement on Special Ed/&lt;800 SRI</td>
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<td>“tell” on them</td>
<td>lexicon student support capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method Memos</td>
<td>Very needy vs. self-sufficient</td>
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<td>Student interview member-check</td>
<td>Noncompliance of students</td>
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<td>20% on probation</td>
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<td>Positive relationships with students</td>
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<td>Focus group member-check</td>
<td>(reported by students)</td>
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<td>Staff shadowing notes</td>
<td>Some students supported more</td>
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<td>Shadowing ELD teacher in-service</td>
<td>because seen as taking school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadowing dean(s)</td>
<td>seriously</td>
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<td>Focus group triangulation</td>
<td>Mediator for student issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Talk</td>
<td>Remembering student family details</td>
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<tr>
<td>The yard</td>
<td>Commended for getting to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hold (for “aggressive behavior”)</td>
<td>students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timecard can be alibi</td>
<td>Gender issues in building rapport with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most wanting students</td>
<td>male administration, CSO’s, and male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-lawyer Dean provides VP feedback</td>
<td>student</td>
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<td>on school district case</td>
<td>Fist bumps, hugs, and greetings</td>
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<td>Deans search students or say police</td>
<td>Advise students not to leave but don’t</td>
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<tr>
<td>will be asked to search them</td>
<td>“tell” on them</td>
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<td>Staff Policing/Surveillance Strategies</td>
<td>Based on student progress statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>solution-oriented</td>
<td>Constant reminders of possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closure/downsizing</td>
<td>VP/Principal lesson observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Controlling Student Behavior
Parenting strategy to redirection/told to settle down
Reality checks/reminders of progress (lack of)
Shifting seating arrangement
Awards for most progress
Low-attendance tracking
Holiday incentives (gift cards, food, etc.)
Free-dress days earned
Different bell schedule/school calendar
Student awareness of surveillance
Progress statistics
Reminded of their role/purpose in program

Charter School Students
Students playing hackey sacks in the mornings
Uniform policies (morning/break checks)

Role of CSO’s
Outsourced by private company
Called into classroom when students are “noncompliant” (refusing to take test)
Work with police and Dean(s) when students resist to be searched
Assist with arrests in/near school (1000 yards?)
Watch program students near closing time
Tardy slips
Send students home for uniform noncompliance

No lab chemistry/biology
Teachers alternate lessons-giving

Program Challenges
VP leaves after a few years
Writing class requirement changes
Low-attendance (59%)
Counselor zones out/misses frequently
Teacher gives up engaging in meetings mid-year
Staff unofficial rules about letting students pass a class
Computers crash
Low-attendance leads to downsizing
Switching curriculum software
Changing rules (no phone/no music)
Building rapport before correcting behavior
Inconsistent student redirection
Constant staff substitute(s)
Staff dis/organization on procedures
Graduation requirements missed
Minors and 18+ students

Role of Program Staff-Counselor
Dis/Enroll
Mediating between students
Students reentering schooling
Probation officer student updates

Role of Program Staff-Teachers
Grading
Calls home for student progress
Reluctant about attending Charter 1-wide meetings
Letters home projecting completion

Role of Program Staff-Support Staff
Updating parents/guardians of student progress
Answering incoming/outgoing calls
Parent calls about early dismissal

College-Ready School
Inspirational quotes on walls
Pendants everywhere
A-G curriculum for all
Program survey to ensure “success for all” viewpoints

School-Wide Practices
Campus-wide meeting
All acknowledged (janitors)
Performing teacher support (Golden school awards theme; One school, one love chant)
Teachers mock support (no names)
Book removal during conversion of school (returned this year)
Conversion metaphors
Several staff/teachers written-up
Most teachers are TFA, recent grads
The “hold” has single window in front office

School-Wide Policy
Only standardized curriculum and books allowed
New mandatory student test
Students de-enrolled if absent more than 10 days from any one class
Academic/behavior tracking online available to all staff/teachers

Third Iteration: Coding Scheme with Definitions and Examples
(Development of themes into codes)
**Academic/Disciplinary Tracking**
Anything having to do with the ways that school personnel in the program ensure student academic progress or track behavioral compliance
- Redirection
- “Reality checks” - Reminders of purpose/role in program, program predecessors have fared
- Daily printed goals
- Curriculum progress statistics
- Attendance progress

**Civic Engagement**
Anytime students or community members talk about their community or surroundings
- School alumni at grocery store not proud of alma mater
- Students not feeling connected to physical surroundings
- Lack of “community” views
- “Dirty” views
- Students aware of video surveillance

**Emotional Labor of Building Rapport**
These are the emotional efforts and results of trying to build rapport with participants in the field
- Fist bump and hug greetings
- Commended for getting to know students
- Absent/new student resulted in continuous rapport
- Seen as student mediator
- Unable to build rapport with some students
- Seen as “favorite” teacher
- Gender issues with teen boys
- Inappropriate behavior from male administrators/CSO’s

**Formal Neighborhood Economy**
Activities that community members, including students, engage in that allow them to legally make money through a job
- Dispensaries (over 18+ year olds)
- “Latino Square” sales opportunities
- Fast food stores

**Incentive System**
Students were constantly incentivized to attend regularly and do their work. These are the rewards they could earn over time, sometimes through a number of earned golden tickets
- Free dress Fridays
- Awards/scholarships
- Holiday event attendance
- Phone/music permission
- Summer limited enrollment
- Daily ticket drawing
- Gift cards
- Food

**Informal Neighborhood Economy**
Activities that community members, including students, engage in that allow them to make money or barter services from others
- Fruta (fruit) man
- Clothing stands
- Program student selling chips
Candy/chip stands on front yards
Prostitution
Weed kid

Method Memos
All instances in which I refer to the process of collecting data; challenges, plans, or updates. I also noted when I conducted member-checking in the field
Student interview member-check
Staff post-interview briefs
Focus group member-check
Staff shadowing notes
Shadowing ELD teacher in-service
Shadowing dean(s)
Focus group triangulation

Negative Perceptions of Students
This is coded whenever youth are described by school personnel in a negative tone
Lack of control (crazy/weird)
Very needy
Noncompliant
On probation (20%)

Policing Program Staff
These are the strategies, practices, or policies used by either the program organization or school administration to control and monitor program staff
Quality based on student progress statistics
Liaison check-ups
Gift cards
Asked to give each other kudos by VP/list accomplishments
Asked to not make excuses/be solution-oriented
Constant reminders of possible closure/downsizing
VP/Principal lesson observations

Policing Student Bodies
These are the strategies, practices, or policies used by either charter school personnel or program staff to control and monitor the bodies of students
Seating chart changes
Strict uniform code
Bell schedule/school calendar
Timecards clocking in/out
Buzz-in door camera locks
Locked restrooms
Padlock to prevent leaving
Displayed grad/class rates
Metal detectors

Positive Perceptions of Students
Some students receive more academic or social support from teachers or program staff because of these beliefs about students.
Mature/self-sufficient
Taking schooling seriously
Positive personal relationships with individual student(s)
Prison Talk
Instances when school personnel in/out of the program talk, behave or interact with disciplinary or control strategies indicative of criminal justice system
- The yard
- The hold (single window room in front office for “aggressive behavior”)
- Timecard as alibi
- Most wanting students
- Ex-lawyer Dean helps VP with school district case
- Students searches by Dean(s)
- Police involvement if search noncompliance
- Cop cars stationed at every school gate
- School gate camera
- Arrests of students in/out of school property
- Program is compared to correctional facility with same program

Program Challenges
Any issues having to do with the program
Student
- Low-attendance (59%)
- Some are Special Ed/<800 lexicon
- 40% on IAP
Program Staff
- Counselor zones out/misses frequently
- Unofficial rules about passing classes
- Teacher gives up engaging mid-year
- Building rapport before correcting behavior
- Constant staff substitute(s)
- Staff dis/organization on procedures
- Inconsistent student redirection
- Graduation requirements missed
- Changing rules (no phone/no music)
- VP leaves after a few years (staff continuity)
Structure
- English class requirement changes
- Computers crash
- Switching curriculum software
- Minors and 18+ students
- Downsizing next year
- Year-round orientations

Rapport Building Strategies
While in the field, I employed various strategies to build rapport with participants. This code captures those strategies
- Advise but not tell on students
- Hang out with staff after “work” hours
- Sharing personal relevant stories
- Limited content knowledge
- Access to unlocking quizzes

Role of Program Staff
The expected or performed responsibilities or duties of program staff by type of role. They all redirect students when not on task and give advice to students on personal matters that come up for them.
Counselor
• Dis/Enroll students officially
• Mediating between students
• Assisting reentering students
• Update probation officers
• Keep track of classes/units
• Attend program staff meetings
• College advising
• Promote for graduation
• Meeting with parents

Teachers
• Grading/passing classes
• Calls home for student progress
• Attend program and school staff meetings
• Take turns with announcements
• Letters home projecting completion
• Advising students
• Assisting with content subjects
• Meeting with parents

Support Staff
• Updating parents/guardians of student progress
• Answering incoming/outgoing calls
• Parent calls about early dismissal
• Updating list of active students
• Attend program staff meetings
• Translating parent meetings
• Buying food/incentives

Safety Talk
This is when school personnel (either in the program or school) warn me or each other about their concerns about my or other’s safety as a result of being outside of school grounds
• Parking in gated lot inside school
• Warned about walking to store for snack
• Told about recent shootings

School-wide Events
These are the school and classroom practices, policies and roles of personnel in the school

College-Ready Policy
• Inspirational quotes on walls
• Pendants everywhere
• A-G curriculum for all
• Program survey to ensure “success for all” viewpoints

CSO’s/Dean(s)
• Some outsourced through private company
• Called into classroom when students are “noncompliant” (refusing to take test)
• Work with police and Dean(s) when students resist to be searched
• Assist with arrests in/near school (1000 yards?)
• Watch program students near closing time
• Tardy slips
• Send students home for uniform noncompliance
• Uniform morning/break checks

In-Service Meetings
• All acknowledged (janitors)
• Performing teacher support (Golden school awards theme; One school, One love chant)
• Teachers mock support (no names)

Teacher Narratives

• Conversion metaphors
• Several staff/teachers written-up
• Most teachers are TFA, recent grads
• Personal book libraries removed during school conversion (returned this year)

Other Practices
• Only standardized curriculum and books allowed
• New mandatory student test
• Students de-enrolled if absent more than 10 days from any one class
• Academic/behavior tracking online available to all staff/teachers

Student Personal Backgrounds
This code captures any non-academic issues, problems, or situations students are in that explain why they missed school
• Students as parents/pregnant
• Foster/young parents
• Moving around/away
• Death/Divorce
• Psychological diagnoses

Student Interests
These are the non-academic interests students mention they do or engage in during program hours
• Dance
• Music
• Singing
• Drawing/street art (graffiti)
• Poetry
• Parties/hanging-out
• Make-up/hair

Student Progress
These are the student strategies or impediments to academically progressing in their classes
• Frustration/set backs from lack of content mastery
• Focused on graduation goal
• Grading complaints
• Seeking out specific teachers/content knowers
• Asking for help with quizzes
• Communal test-taking strategy
• Computers crashing causes check-outs
• School as “playing the game”

Student Socializing/Distractions
During program time, many students engage in activities with peers/others that often distracts them from focusing on their work or offers them reprieve from content subject frustration/other issues
• Talking/Arguing/Rumors
• Phones (instagram, snapchat)
• Cracking the internet (for answers)
• Hanging out in the foyer/hallway
• Hanging out outside school gate
• Sharing personal stories with me
• Drug use/Under the Influence
• Invited to daytime parties by older community members that hang around school
Student Support Services
These are any additional support programs offered for students’ emotional, academic or physical well being. They could be a one-time occurrence or regular program offered throughout the year
• Gang reduction program & community enhancement
• Counseling for foster youth
• Physical activity class (Zumba)
• Urban league program
• Special holiday programming
• Help with enrollment in nearby Employment/Diploma programs
• Local community college application & class enrollment (offered on-site)

Structure of Program
Anything that has to do with how the continuation school is structured
• 3rd party curriculum software on computers
• Joint graduation with school
• Program liaison
• Not intended for <800 lexicon students
• Entrance requirements at discretion of counselor/liaison
• Open on weekend days/2nd sessions for those near graduation

Curriculum
• 2-3 classes assigned on software
• Each class has various sections
• Mix of easy/hard classes
• Study guides/worksheets
• Section quizzes
• Final class test
• English requires essays
• No lab chemistry/biology
• Teachers alternate lessons-giving
• Software curriculum changes

Space
• Open concept room
• 75 Carrels
• Individual computers and office chairs
• Visible teacher/counselor desks
• Entrance counter
• Printers and supplies
• Pictures of graduates with principal
• Three rooms with doors; break, workshop and supplies room
• File cabinets
• College pendants on walls
• Motivational posters

Violence
Some youth, as community members, deal with violence either on the streets or elsewhere. Any reported reasons or consequences of violence to/from students or someone they know are coded here
• Generational gang-ties
• Ex-gang ties (middle school)
• Juvenile justice system/probation
• Drug use (current/prior)
• Being quiet as a strategy
• Being jumped for phone on way to school
- Seeing prostitute violence
- Projects and streets associated with gangs
- Beat up by parent for stealing their money
- Hit and run on skateboarding student
- Older community members verbally harass students (ask if prostitutes/hit up for phones)
- Bulletproof counters at stores/restaurants

### Fourth Iteration: Concept Mapping for Research Questions
(Using coded themes of observation data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ#1: How does the current policy context structure how school personnel understand what “safety” means?</th>
<th>RQ#2: Given current understanding of school success how are students imagined as “college ready”?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Neighborhood Economy</td>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal Neighborhood Economy</td>
<td>Program Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policing Program Staff</td>
<td>Role of Program Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Challenges</td>
<td>School-wide events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Personal Backgrounds</td>
<td>Student Interests</td>
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<td></td>
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