The Praxis of Critical Pedagogy and Educational Reform:
Analyzing Selected Media Coverage of the U.S. Charter School Movement

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Joe Kincheloe

who changed the way I see and am in the world.

You will always be one of the most important voices I hear, and

I am eternally grateful for your "radical love".

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To Kristin McNeill for loving me each day: you have provided the support, challenge, companionship, editorial critique, unwavering belief in the process, and so much more. Just when I am unsure, your belief in me helps me continue.

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Abstract

American charter schools are entering their third decade. What began in 1991 as a single piece of legislation in a single state has grown to include legislation in 40 states and the opening of over 5,000 schools. With the passing of No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002, and the 2010 Race to the Top stimulus funding bill, charter schools have been thrust to the forefront of legislation around educational reform, specifically educational reform of urban schools with large populations of minority students where there is a long history of a significant achievement gap. This dissertation uses critical pedagogy to analyze the media coverage of the American charter school movement.

The dissertation has two sections. The first focuses on theory and develops a critical pedagogical framework to discuss understandings of education and education reform. This section begins with an autobiographical exploration of ideas about education and then explores critiques of neoliberalism and mainstream theories of intelligence to challenge these ideas. The section concludes by using postformalism and critical pedagogy to develop a critical pedagogical vision for education and education reform. The second section uses this vision to analyze selected media coverage of American charter schools by detailing the coding, analysis, observations and responses to articles appearing in *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, and *The New York Times* referring to charter schools.

The dissertation concludes with summary observations detailing how the media coverage of charter schools reinforces common sense understandings of schools, while failing to critically interrogate systemic societal issues of social injustice. It also details an important consideration for critical scholars about how past "blame the victim" discourses appear to have shifted to be focused on blaming educational failures on teachers.

Resumé

Les écoles à charte américaines amorcent leur troisième décennie. Ce qui a débuté en 1991 comme un seul acte législatif dans un seul état s'est amplifié au point de régir 40 états et de conduire à l'ouverture de plus de 5000 écoles. Avec l'adoption de la loi « No Child Left Behind » (pas d'enfants laissés de côté) en 2002, et le projet de loi de financement pour stimuler la relance 2010 « Race to the Top » (course vers le sommet), les écoles à charte ont été propulsées à l'avant-plan de la législation en matière de réforme de l'éducation, plus précisément de la réforme de l'éducation des écoles urbaines qui comptent une grande partie d'élèves de groupes minoritaires qui accusent, depuis longtemps, un important déficit de réussite. C'est par le biais de la pédagogie critique que cette dissertation analyse la couverture médiatique du mouvement des écoles à charte américaines.

Cette dissertation comprend deux sections. La première est axée sur la théorie, élaborant un cadre pédagogique critique qui va à l'encontre de la compréhension générale ayant trait à l'éducation et la réforme de l'éducation. Cette section débute par une exploration autobiographique d'idées pour ensuite explorer des critiques du néolibéralisme et des théories courantes de l'intelligence pour remettre ces idées en question. Cette section se termine en ayant recours au postformalisme et à la pédagogie critique pour élaborer une vision pédagogique cruciale pour l'éducation et la réforme de l'éducation. La seconde section reprend cette vision pour analyser la couverture médiatique choisie des écoles à charte américaines en expliquant le codage, les analyses, les observations et les réactions aux articles traitant des écoles à charte parus dans le *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek* et *The New York Times*.

La conclusion de cette dissertation cerne des observations sommaires précisant comment la couverture médiatique des écoles à charte renforce de la compréhension générale des écoles alors qu'elle omet de se pencher de façon éclairée sur les problèmes sociétaux systémiques de l'injustice sociale. Cette conclusion décrit aussi en détail un élément important pour les érudits critiques, soit le fait que les discours d'autrefois sur « blâmer la victime » semblent avoir bifurqué pour rendre les professeurs responsables des échecs des étudiants.

Chapter 1

Overview and Autobiographical Exploration

This chapter presents a brief overview of this dissertation, introduces some general methodological considerations, and explores the origins of my interest in charter schools. I use an autobiographical narrative to locate myself within my research position and I conclude with a discussion about the importance of foundational frames for considering issues of educational practice and educational reform.

Overview

This dissertation has a number of discrete sections that build and circle back on each other. I build upon my commitment to postformalism and critical pedagogy as they inform the various layers of research.

The first four chapters are theoretically focused and explore general issues of education, education reform, and methodology. Chapter 1 explores ideas about education and education reform. Chapters 2 challenges common sense understandings of education by exploring critiques of neoliberalism and modern western conceptions of intelligence. Chapter 3 uses postformalism and critical pedagogy to develop a contrasting framework for educational reform. Chapter 4 details methodological considerations of this research.

Chapters 5-7 focus on my analysis of the media coverage of charter schools. In chapter 5, I review the history and scholarly research about charter schools and the charter school movement that I identify as most important. In chapters 6 and 7, I explore how a selection of print media covers charter schools. Specifically, in chapter 6, I examine the 2008 and 2009 coverage of charter schools in national magazines, and, in chapter 7, I examine *The New York Times'* coverage of charter schools in 2009. This analysis is accompanied by a narrative response to my observations about the coverage.

In chapter 8, I circle back to focus on some of the most important points of this coverage and explore these issues within the context of my earlier discussion

of foundational issues of education and education reform. I also reflect on how this work impacts the analytic frames I developed in chapters 1-4.

Methodological Discussion

Many of the specific methodologies for this dissertation emerge from my understanding of critical pedagogy and postformalism as detailed in chapters 2 and 3. For this reason, I wait until chapter 4 to explicitly discuss methodology. That said, the methodology resonates with generally accepted practices of sound qualitative inquiry as outlined by John Creswell (2003) in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. The most relevant for my research are:

> Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured… The theory of general pattern of understanding will emerge as it begins with initial codes, develops into broad themes, and coalesces into a grounded theory of broad interpretation. (pp. 181-182)
>
> Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. This means that the researcher makes an interpretation of the study. (p. 182)
>
> The qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically. This explains why qualitative research studies appear as broad, panoramic views rather than as micro-analysis. (p. 182)
>
> The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study. (p. 182)
>
> The qualitative researcher uses complex reasoning that is multi-faceted, iterative and simultaneous. (p. 182)

Why Charter Schools?

This study interrogates many of the defining concepts of charter schools (e.g., freedom, accountability, innovation, etc.) explicitly linking them to how they may shape dialogues about education and education reform. These connections serve to contextualize a theoretical appreciation for critical pedagogy

within the application of reading everyday media. This process should encourage us to be much more sensitive about the importance of tacit foundational frames in shaping these dialogues. This research also provides a platform to closely analyze mainstream media coverage of a singular topic as a case study of the ways in which the media may portray a particular issue.

My interest in charters predates graduate school. In 2003, my brother Chris' friend co-founded what would become the highly successful and renowned *Boston Collegiate Charter School* on whose board my brother currently sits. At the time, he suggested that, rather than looking at graduate school, I consider applying for a position at one of the charter management training programs. These programs provide enrollees a year's salary in return for attending their training program and an agreement to write a charter application. Though I decided to attend graduate school instead, I learned enough about charter schools to spark my interest in researching and analyzing their effectiveness in education reform in the United States.

Central to my attraction to charters was my background and experience in independent schools combined with my strong interest in public education. From a purely pragmatic standpoint, charters offered a way for a non-certified teacher/administrator to be involved in the public sector. Charter schools also seemed to offer the same freedom enjoyed by independent schools—governance, autonomy, and decision-making, etc.— that could allow for innovation and change.

My interest in charters continued during graduate school, as the topic became the common ground for discussions between my brother and me. As I write later, when we would discuss his work in charters, I would often respond with some skepticism both about the specific pedagogical approach of his charter school as well as the macro potential for such schools to change education as a societal tenet in meaningful ways. Many of our conversations revolved around the way he characterized charter schools and the way he evaluated their success.

I first articulated my concerns about the potential for the charter movement to negatively impact school reform in a book I edited *Rocking Your*

World: The Emotional Journey into Critical Discourses (Churchill, 2008a). I raised questions about how the success of individual charter schools might shape public (mis)understandings about systemic inequities of the U.S. public education system:

> The success of charter schools can be understood as contributing to and perpetuating the myth that the resource gap between high resource, wealthy public schools and low resource, poorer public schools is somehow not to blame for their different student achievement levels. This is proven by the success of charter schools (with reportedly no more resources per pupil than the average) to successfully produce higher achieving students than their traditional counterparts.
>
> There is an implicit conclusion that arises from the assumption that the success of charter schools is directly linked to students' willingness to do homework, the school's disciplined academic culture, and the degree of positive involvement of parents; that the failure of the traditional public schools in the same neighbourhoods must be because students are not motivated to succeed, the academic culture does not reinforce discipline, and parents don't care to be involved. This implicit conclusion hides the also important considerations of major resource discrepancies and the curriculum bias of White, middle class knowledge. Thus resource discrepancies and curriculum bias are exonerated, replaced with evidence that points to the level of motivation of the community, parents, teachers, and students as most important to school success. (pp. 18-19)

These questions about how claims about the success of charter schools might impact educational reform provided a starting point for this dissertation. My brother's frequent complaints about the way the media unfairly critiqued the work of charter schools provided the impetus to focus on media coverage.

Positioning Myself

Autobiography

I contextualize my own positionality and epistemological growth through an autobiographical lens. This exploration emerges from William Pinar's (1994) conception of *currere* and appreciating how the past unconsciously influences the present: "The present then becomes an acting out of the past, the superimposition of past issues and situations and persons onto the present. The complex of habitual responses is constitutive of the present personality. Its predictability is its habituality is its unconsciousness is its pastness" (p. 22). Pinar suggests that intellectual work can serve to help us transform ourselves if we keep central certain questions in our work:

1) "Are one's intellectual interests biographically freeing, that is do they permit, in fact encourage, movement?" (p. 27);

2) "Do they point to increased conceptual understanding, sophistication and refinement, deeper knowledge and understanding, of both one's chosen field of study and that field's symbolic relationship to one's evolving biography?" (p. 27);

3) "Do they move one to enter new, higher levels of being?" (p. 27).

Pinar (2004) asserts that: "After self-understanding, comes self-mobilization in the service of social reconstruction" (p. 201). In realizing that the past informs the present and in the hope that the intellectual work that challenges my past can transform my present, I seek to further understand my own story and position my intellectual work. I invite readers to consider how my experiences match and differ from their own, shaping the manner in which they understand this research.

Graduate school: a transformative experience.

I began my graduate studies committed to studying education reform. During the first year, I began to examine my own tacit assumptions about education.

The book *Dividing Classes: How the Middle Class Negotiates and Rationalizes School Advantage* (Brantlinger, 2003) proved to be an important component of this process. Of particular importance was Brantlinger's observation that many people "attribute stratified school structures and outcomes to the essentially superior traits of higher social classes and the natural result of fair competition in meritocratic schools and job markets" (p. 188), specifically citing "adults of their class striving to succeed in occupation and settle in good neighborhoods, parents of their class caring about schooling and providing intellectually stimulating home environments, and children of their class being smart and having high aspirations and work ethics" (p. 188).

My scholarship took on a number of forms. I read a variety of 21st century critical discourses that included critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and multiculturalism. I also examined the antecedents of these modern discourses in the broader based critical social theories of the early and mid 20th century.

Of particular importance for this research was reading Joe Kincheloe's edited book, *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered* (2004a). In the first chapter, Kincheloe (2004b) argues that Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is naïve and oppressive because it is ensnared in the mythical Cartesian web of positivist, value-free scientific inquiry. Kincheloe points out that Gardner's assertion that his (Gardner's) analysis is strictly limited to the pedagogical and psychological—claiming independence from socio-cultural, political or epistemological—is faulty. He claims that Gardner fails to consider "how dominant-power-inscribed psychologies and educational practices can harm individuals—especially those marginalized in some ways by the dynamics of, say, race, class, and gender" (p. 9).

In the final chapter, Kathleen Berry (2004) explores the impact of this failure and contends that Gardner's creation of multiple intelligences results in "discourses and practices that reproduce modern structures of and techniques of capitalism and thus reproduce systems of and practices of exclusion, inequities, and social injustices" (p. 239). Berry describes how Gardner's system creates a hierarchy of capital that ranks students according to their facility with one, two,

three or more intelligences and thus rationalizes the economic and social stratification of capitalist societies—a point that resonates strongly with Brantlinger's earlier contention about the middle class belief in meritocracy.

Combining these perspectives caused me to reflect on my own experience with multiple intelligences and schooling, and how Gardner's work had manifested itself in the school at which I worked for eight years before starting my doctoral studies. I reconsidered how its embrace of multiple intelligences (MI) manifested itself along axes of power—specifically with regards to urban students of colour recruited to play athletics. By celebrating their "bodily-kinesthetic intelligence" (Gardner, 1983/1993), the school could overlook discrepancies in academic achievement. Rather than question our pedagogy, Gardner allowed us to see these discrepancies as a normal outcome of our students' natural abilities. In a graduate class on critical pedagogy, I wrote about my uneasiness:

> MI thus serves to justify the academic failings of marginalized students by crafting a model that continues to keep primal the talent level of the individual without consideration for a more social model of cognition that would bring into question the school's culpability (and that of the white middle class men who are running the school) in the failure of certain groups of students. Instead what MI theory offers is an out. MI clearly suggests that in a progressive world we should not be so quick to 'judge' others as less intelligent or less capable; we should understand that they have their own unique talents and abilities that are just different from ours. MI offers as a solution the valuing of these differences as a way around the racist quagmire of modern schooling. The eventual outcome of this dialogue being that our 'minority' students can grow up to be athletes and coaches and that we can all pretend we believe this is every bit as good as our white students who grow up to be doctors and lawyers because this is, after all, what they are best at doing! Wow–Gardner as progressive racist, and me as an unwitting accomplice? (Churchill, unpublished manuscript, 2006)

This reflection has a sense of toxicity (accusing Gardner of being a "progressive racist") with which I continue to, capturing the angst that accompanied my emerging criticality. This uneasiness about the complicity of my own past (as well as potentially present and future) forms an important component of how I engage in my research, and resonates with what Aaron Gresson (2004) identifies as being fairly common of many white male students as they become exposed to the oppressive nature of white western patriarchy. He shares one white male student's reflection on the experience of taking a course in minority education in the United States: "'Every Monday and Wednesday, I come here to learn what an asshole I have been throughout history'" (Gresson, 2004, p. 2). I have experienced similar feelings.

This reflection is an example of how unexamined assumptions, with critical reflection, may be revealed as problematic re-inscriptions of power and rationalizations of the status quo. This careful examination of assumptions is central to my understanding of critical pedagogy and my commitment to examine my own scholarship as closely as possible. Foucault (1988) characterizes this appreciation of critique as:

> A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought, the practice that we accept rest. (p. 154)

Which Foucault then follows with a definition of criticism as:

> Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult. (p. 155)

This developing appreciation for examining underlying tacit assumptions began to change the way I was examining issues of educational reform. Rather than focusing on pragmatic, surface-level issues of implementation and developing efficiencies—something that my analytical, pragmatic, M.B.A.-trained self was excellent at doing—I was beginning to understand that I was

going to need to examine issues within education at a much more fundamental (and personal) level. This exploration drew me to critical pedagogy, and the discourse about the function of education in society and the need for fundamental educational change.

Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition (Giroux, 1983/2001) is often acknowledged as the first work that defines and names critical pedagogy. The book details its antecedents by exploring the connection between the Frankfurt School's critical social theory and the work of Paulo Freire and liberation theology to form a space of radical schooling that Giroux positions as being separate from both conservative and liberal doctrines. Giroux (1983/2001) details how assumptions of both conservative and liberal theories of schooling are "firmly entrenched in the logic of technocratic rationality and ha[ve] been anchored in a discourse that finds its quintessential expression in the attempt to find universal principles of education that are rooted in an ethos of instrumentalism or self-serving individualism" (p. 3). He highlights the deficiencies of these models: "At the same time, these accounts have suppressed questions of the relations among power, knowledge and ideology" (p. 3).

This characterization of both conservative and liberal models of education as being overly individualistic and instrumental in nature without consideration for the role of power and its potential to perpetuate dominance and oppression informed the emerging backbone of my critical consciousness. It also laid the foundation for an analytical framework that would appreciate critical pedagogy as a transgressive theory that lies outside the mainstream boundaries of both conservative and liberal ideologies and instead pushes against the assumptions on which both these mainstream conservative and liberal models lay in order to imagine the potential for education to be individually, socially and culturally transformative. Exploring critical pedagogy as a theory that transcends both conservative and liberal doctrines is central to my analysis of the media coverage of charter schools.

Before graduate school.

My personal story about education begins before I was born. In 1965, my parents made a strategic decision to live in a rural town where investing in public education was not yet a priority. As such, the town had relatively low housing prices coupled with low tax rates. This combination meant low levels of funding for public schools. I say their decision was strategic because, at the age of four, I was taken out of a public school and enrolled in a private school that invested heavily in the education of its students (or should I say whose families invested heavily in the education of their children?). This investment included not only tuition dollars but also the precious investment of time—time for volunteering, commuting, and helping with homework.

From the beginning, I "did" school well—although never exceptionally well. I carefully navigated the line between what I knew my parents would consider good enough and my own self-limiting tendency to not stand out.

By the end of middle school, I had learned enough to be an excellent test-taker, which allowed me to apply to and be admitted at two of the top private high schools in New England. I did well enough there to then go on to an Ivy League university, and to graduate with honours. I was rarely turned on by school, or interested in class material beyond doing enough to maintain my status as an honour roll student. School was a game, and my game-play was to do well enough to not alarm my parents or close doors to any career aspirations. While not openly conscious or expressive of my careful navigation of these lines, I do remember being somewhat conscious of what I was doing. I remember thinking that this navigation of school and one's relationship with classes and performance was normal. I am certain the idea that other students my age did not have a similar relationship with school never occurred to me.

This story of my relationship to education shaped my understanding of how the world operates. For example, one primary theme of my story is **choice**. My parents chose to live in a less affluent town, they chose to not go on many vacations, they chose not to buy us lots of new things. All of these choices were made because they chose to put their financial resources in my (and my siblings')

education. Even in cases where choice is financially limited, parents can choose to instill the importance of education within their kids (without expensive private schools). Students can choose to apply themselves, study hard and transcend their surroundings. Besides my own lived experience of choice, I have witnessed many less affluent (often minority students from financially difficult backgrounds) attend the same schools that I attended by achieving at high levels and receiving scholarships.

A second primary theme of my educational experience has been the importance of **testing**. In the world of private schools, each step is accompanied by tests that validate your knowledge, affirm your educational prowess, and act as a means of entry to the next step. As someone who successfully navigated this path from private elementary school, to private high school, and then on to private university, testing has always been both central and affirming.

In lockstep with the world of standardized testing, I have been successful at learning the lessons of standardized knowledge. Math and science are the supposed domains of logic and truth; theories can be tested empirically; the only research method that can show causation is double blind experimental. Qualitative research, while possibly important to generate potential theories, should not ever be confused with science.

Competition as a means of achieving accountability is a theme. Competition was central to my educational experience. I competed to get good grades in order to move up through the world of New England private schools and universities, and schools competed to attract me as a student. This model held schools accountable to me as a consumer while also holding me accountable as a student. At times, schools did not do as good a job as I thought they should, and there were times the reverse was true.

My school experiences had parallels with my father's experience of running his own business. His accountability was to customers, employees, the marketplace. Some things were within his control, some were not. I remember the building recession in the early 1980s that resulted in his business going bankrupt. He recovered by fracturing off a component of his old business and building a

new one in the following years—an experience that I thought demonstrated how successful people become (or remain successful) by being resilient in difficult times (i.e., pulling yourself up by your bootstraps when times get tough).

I also learned the differences between the private and public sector—mainly that the private sector could always do things better than the public one. This lesson was perhaps the least explicit but one of the most powerful. In choosing not to attend public schools, the message from my parents was clear. Private schools, controlled by private markets, were simply better. Accountability was higher, teachers were better qualified, students performed better. It was never about resources, it was about creating competition, choice, accountability—these were the variables that made it so that private schools were better than public schools. To the extent that these lessons can be generalized, I learned that everything in the private sector was more productive and of better quality.

A final theme was my understanding of **individual responsibility and personal agency**. This theme is one that is embedded implicitly in the lessons of my experience. It was through realizing my own individual responsibility (and my parents realizing theirs) that choices around educational experience were made, and it was through embracing this responsibility that I then succeeded along this path. I can recount countless examples of friends with more or less resources who were less or more successful than I have been. I have always considered it a given that these successes (and frankly failures) were due to people either embracing their individual responsibility and living up to the challenges that the world put in front of them, or not. As I had come to understand the world, the locus of control was firmly implanted within the self—that is to say individuals can be whatever they want, provided they are willing to do the hard work to achieve it.

The experiences served to inform my pre-graduate school personal *zeitgeist* within which I had come to understand the world around me and how it operates. These foundational frames included believing in high levels of personal agency, the importance of testing, a positivist framework with regard to knowledge and research, competition as an efficient, fair, and even best way to manage the world, and a distrust of the public sector. Each of these frames

contributed to my understanding of the world and shaped the way I thought about and approached ideas around education reform.

After my second year of graduate studies, I wrote the following reflection describing my pre-graduate school beliefs about education and education reform:

> At 35 years old, I had quit my job running the admissions office of a private high school in New Hampshire and began a Ph.D. program focused on curriculum design. I left because I was frustrated by the school's attempts to change the culture without addressing the curriculum and my inability to help fix this shortcoming. Having spent most of my time outside the classroom in administrative positions, I decided taking the time to study curriculum would help empower me to be more effective in future endeavours. I began my graduate program with a clear understanding that curriculum could be designed better. Armed with an MBA, a dozen years of management experience, and a keen recognition that most schools were inefficient, I was ready to join the new generation of pragmatic, solution-oriented, technology-savvy school reformers. (Churchill, 2008b, pp. 11-12)

I felt my M.B.A. and management experience would enable me to streamline education. Embedded in this thinking were the tenets of both conservative and liberal educational principles against which critical pedagogy pushes: "technocratic rationality…anchored in a discourse that finds its quintessential expression in the attempt to find universal principles of education that are rooted in an ethos of instrumentalism or self-serving individualism" (Giroux, 2001, p. 3). In my emerging criticality, I saw my former self as the enemy Giroux and other critical pedagogues frequently criticized.

I had never considered education political. I did not consider myself political. My assumption had always been that surely everyone would want all students to succeed—some people were just confused about how to go about it. The idea that profit, power, ideology or the maintenance of middle and upper class advantage were central questions for education reform was not something I had given much consideration. As I read more, I found myself wanting to

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understand why these questions had remained off radar. Why had I considered education a non-political enterprise whose reform could be solved with a pragmatic approach of best practices? Was my understanding common?

Exploring the origins of my beliefs: neoliberalism?

These reflections about my own values and beliefs about education led me to explore more closely the origin of these assumptions. I wanted to understand why so many of my educational assumptions had, to date, been left as unexamined foundations of my educational beliefs. Since these beliefs had been so accurately described by Giroux nearly thirty years ago, I knew that they could not be uncommon. I therefore knew that they must arise from somewhere. What is it that made me interpret and make meaning of my experiences in the way that I had? What is it that spawned my technocratic beliefs and had convinced me of the apolitical nature of education?

In much of the critical pedagogy discourse, **neoliberalism** is named as a central issue to resist (e.g., Giroux, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008a; Kumashiro, 2008; Apple, 1995). I was drawn to this term because it is so often used to describe the social and political *zeitgeist* of the time in which I grew up, went to school, and began working (specifically the U.S. in the 80s and 90s). A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) helped further my understanding of this economic, social, and political ideology.

Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). Embedded in this statement is the assertion that neoliberalism claims to be a sort of best practices for human well-being. This claim asserts neoliberalism's impact as not just an economic system (although that is clearly its origin) but also a social and political one.

This characterization of neoliberalism as a moral high ground to which all should aspire resonates strongly with my experience growing up in the United States in the late 20th century. Dominated by a discourse that freedom, democracy

and capitalism are in the final evolutionary phases, the modern U.S. represents some sort of culmination of world historical order. This claim that the U.S. has arrived at the ultimate pinnacle of democracy, freedom, and human well-being is an important component of what undermines the potential for people to continue to consider change. The rejection of this hypothesis is an important component of my emerging criticality. As Kaye (1996) describes, this strategy is not unique to the modern era: "Thus, the intellectuals of the New Right proceeded to do what the agents of the ruling classes have always been wont to do. They announce 'the end of history,' informing us that radical-democratic possibilities are finished, that the further progress and development of liberty and equality is foreclosed, forever" (p. 247).

Harvey (2005) also talks about how neoliberalism views public goods. While it acknowledges that the state must intervene to privatize markets—such as land, water, education, and health care (see p. 2)—neoliberalism places important limitations on this intervention: "State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). The beneficial power of a market driven society where individuals are allowed, encouraged and expected to make choices in their own best interest free from government intervention resonates strongly with my pre-graduate school understanding of and experience in the world.

Harvey (2005) traces the origins of neoliberalism as a major global discourse to Ronald Reagan and Paul Volcker (in the United States), Margaret Thatcher (in England) and Deng Xiapong (in China), and the timing of this movement to the late 1970s and early 80s (see p. 1) . This timing coincides with my earliest memories of politics and economics. I remember the high inflationary period of the 1ate 1970s that eventually resulted in my father losing his business. I remember the political turmoil of the Iran hostage crisis. Reagan's election is my first memory of an American presidential transition. During middle and high

school in the 80s, I remember a time of great economic growth and prosperity. America not only did well but proved, with the coinciding collapse of the Soviet empire, that freedom, democracy and deregulated markets was the best possible solution for creating a wealthy society.

Harvey (2005) asserts that this neoliberal ideology comes to dominate the late 20th century, early 21st century global landscape in such diverse countries as the former Soviet republics, Scandinavian countries, South Africa and New Zealand (see p. 2). Harvey also claims that "the advocates of the neoliberal way now occupy positions of considerable influence in education (the universities and many think tanks), in the media, in key state institutions (treasury departments, the central banks), and also international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) that regulate global finance and trade" (p. 3). He asserts that "neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). This assertion does not surprise me. His description of neoliberalism resonates closely with my common-sense way of seeing the world. Graduate school has challenged this view.

Naming the crossroads.

Within the context of Kincheloe's radical critique of Gardner's progressive theory of intelligence, and Harvey's deconstruction of neoliberalism, I started to further appreciate the aggressively challenging work of Brantlinger and Gresson as they forced me to confront my own privilege and privileged way of understanding the world. I began to make sense of my own story and struggle with what I now consider my own (mis)beliefs about education. As I sought to break free from a technocratic view of education, I started to consider the social, power, political, gendered, etc. domains of education and started to re-conceptualize a radical or transformative educational project. The process of questioning old beliefs had begun. The fissures in my views of the world were

becoming deeper and more significant. I was questioning much of what I had previously accepted without consideration.

Critical Pedagogy and the Importance of Frames

An underlying tension.

I have an internal struggle with the balance between making critical pedagogy tangible—and thus be able to characterize it, name it, talk about it, and analyze it—and critical pedagogy's self-proclaimed stance as a counter-hegemonic discourse whose primary characteristic is not a tangible thing but rather a commitment to fighting against current social injustices thereby helping transform the world into a more humane place. This context dependency can be traced back to critical pedagogy's roots within critical theory. Nigel Blake and Jan Masschelein's (2004) review of critical theory and critical pedagogy identifies this connection in the following manner: "Although it is difficult to describe 'the' ideas of Critical Theory, we can indicate some motives and a principal theoretical interest in the tradition. Among their [scholars of critical pedagogy] motives, we can point to their critical stance toward society in its actual developing forms, informed by a strong ethical concern for the individual and a rejection of all possible excuses for hunger, domination, humiliation, or injustice, and a longing for a better world" (pp. 38-39). Shirley Steinberg (2007) articulates this stance in her preface to *Critical Pedagogy: Where are We Now?* (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007):

> And therein, lies the proverbial rub: there is no it. Critical Pedagogy isn't formulaic, it isn't stagnant…. As a transgressive discourse, practice, and fluid way of seeing the world, those engaged in critical pedagogy continually attempt to redefine themselves through the context in which they find themselves. Once we slow down and stop fluidity, the criticality is gone, and we bog ourselves down in the quicksand of liberalism…. Empowered by the anger we feel from socially unjust practices in the world, we are able to use this anger within the radical practices of our own critical pedagogy. By naming the practices, people, and ideologies that

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infect our schools with dishope, test driven expectations, and socio-economic insults to our students, we create a space for critique and insurgency. (Steinberg, 2007, pp. ix-x)

But Steinberg's articulation of this position does not ameliorate my desire for identifying the "it" of critical pedagogy. Perhaps this search reflects my conservative, middle class, white, neoliberal, positivist background forcing me to try and name "the tenets" of critical pedagogy. Or maybe this unease reflects a greater societal unease with questioning issues of philosophy and purpose, rather than focusing on the concrete and pragmatic. While I recognize critical pedagogy as primarily a counter-hegemonic discourse concerned with issues of social justice and how institutions of schooling re-inscribe patterns of marginalization, it must have foundational educational beliefs. These beliefs would allow critical pedagogy to transcend this starkly relativistic nature and traverse back and forth between its ideological purpose and its pragmatic implementation.

Foundational tenets.

As I have struggled to search for these tenets of critical pedagogy, I conclude that these tenets (at this moment) lie in further exploring neoliberalism and intelligence theories. The challenge I undertake is to answer Steinberg's (2007) charge to understand "the context in which [I] find [myself]" (pp. ix-x)

I believe the current context within which charter schools operate is shaped by neoliberalism and mainstream theories of intelligence. To understand a critical pedagogical challenge to modern public education, one must understand these dominant frames. In Foucauldian terms (as interpreted by Gail Jardine, 2005), I will be developing an archeology ("analysis of a systemic body of knowledge and power," p. 15) of both neoliberalism and intelligence by looking at its genealogy ("an investigation of the meanings of a concept through history into our time," p. 15) with the end goal being of examining its capillary actions ("point at which acts of power and systems of knowledge that are dominant in a society impact the individual," p. 15). This critical analysis serves to contextualize the dominant discourses both within their histories and within their expressions of power in education. Tracing their histories allows understanding (and thus

questioning) of these frames. Through this process, connections can be forged between these discourses and the actual behaviours of schools and people within schools. This analysis promotes the kind of deep understanding of the relationship between meta-societal discourses, frames, common sense or hegemonic understandings (depending on the author and perspective) that serves to constrain and shape dialogue about education and education reform.

This commitment to analyzing frames and challenging the common sense of these frames is a frequent feature of the work of critical discourses and their challenge of mainstream conception of schooling. For example, Michael Apple (2001) asserts that "One of the most important objects of rightist agendas is changing our common-sense, altering the meanings of the most basic categories, the key words, we employ to understand the social and educational world and our place within it" (p. 9). In this assertion, Apple makes central the Foucauldian analysis described earlier. Kevin Kumashiro (2008) asserts that "What we take as 'common-sense' is not something that just *is*; it is something that is developed and learned and perpetuated over time" (p. 3), highlighting the importance of its social construction. He continues by talking about the role common sense plays in considering school reform: " 'Common Sense' narrowly defines what is consistent with the purpose of schooling. Common Sense does not tell us what schools *could* be doing; it tells us what schools *should* be doing. To reform schools in a fundamental way, one must first redefine common sense and reframe how we think about education" (p. 5). He urges readers to understand discourse about education and educational reform by "contrast[ing] the efforts of those who want to maintain the status quo, particularly its hierarchies and privileges, with the efforts of those who want to change the status quo by raising awareness of and challenging the racism, sexism and other forms of oppression that permeate schools and society" (p. 5). This explains how what Kumashiro has described as common sense (what many would formally refer to as hegemony, a term that traces its roots to Gramsci, 1971/2005) constrains the conversation about schooling and school reform to what should happen. What Apple, Brantlinger, Giroux, Gresson, Kincheloe, Kumashiro, etc. advocate is talking about what

schools could be doing, broadening the conversation to ask fundamental questions about schools, their function and their workings.

As I re-remember (Pinar, 2004) my pre-graduate school conception of school reform—characterized by a technocratic approach to helping raise test scores (a goal that I assumed to be a worthy one) versus a questioning of what those test scores were measuring and how they might contribute to the oppressive nature of schooling—I see the power of frames.

Kincheloe (1999a) explores and defines this frame shifting work by explicitly expanding the definition of frameworks: "The postmodern notion of a paradigm and paradigm shift is more than merely a conceptual framework of an academic discipline. In this framework, a paradigm becomes a cultural dynamic, a sociopolitical schema of concepts, values, assumptions, epistemologies, ontologies, and practices that shape both academic practice and everyday life" (p15). This quote highlights the potential depth and breadth of this approach. I am not simply looking at the best practices of curriculum theory or teaching or school governance. I am examining the underlying frames that shape and limit the conversation. As I challenge frames (neoliberalism and conceptions of intelligence), and explore new frames (postformalism and critical pedagogy) critical visions of education and education reform shift in important and dramatic ways, ways that challenge many of the assumptions about charter school reform and thus inform a critical analysis of its coverage by media.

CHAPTER 2

Exploring Foundational Frames

This chapter explores neoliberalism and the 20th century Western history of intelligence testing and their roles as foundational frames of current educational practices and reform. This frame is central for understanding the macro socio-political context within which charter schools operate.

Neoliberalism Further Examined

Five key aspects of neoliberalism.

Purpose and aim.

As suggested in the previous section, one claim of neoliberal ideology is having developed a sort of best practices for human well-being. This positioning emerged as the neoliberal policies of Reagan, Thatcher and others contrasted themselves to the communist and socialist practices of Russia and Eastern Europe. The growth and prosperity of the 80s in North America and Western Europe juxtaposed against the financial (and political) collapse of Russia and Eastern Europe served as proof that democracy and capitalism (as practiced by neoliberal politicians) was unquestionably good. Reagan's famous 1987 statement: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," provided the triumphant moment that proved democracy and capitalism had won, and the pictures from a bankrupt Russian empire served as proof that the world was better for it.

Ronald Wright (2004) characterizes this moment as follows: "The collapse of the Soviet Union led many to conclude that there was really only one way of progress after all. In 1992 Francis Fukyuyama, a former U.S. State Department official, declared capitalism and democracy were the 'end' of history—not only its destination but its goal" (p. 6).

Harvey (2005) also details the trajectory of neoliberalism. He suggests that the neoliberal project was not a humanitarian effort to make everyone better off culminating with the end of communism and of the cold war, and the spread of democracy into Eastern Europe; but, instead neoliberalism should be understood

in the context of what was happening within North America and Western Europe. He characterizes the emergence of neoliberalism as "a project to achieve the restoration of class power" (p. 16), class power that he contends had been lost after the world wars and great depression. This restoration of class power was made necessary because "one condition of the post-war settlement in almost all countries was that the economic power of the upper classes be restrained and that labour be accorded a much larger share of the economic pie" (p. 15). He describes this post war condition as "embedded liberalism" (p. 11) characterized by "an acceptance that that the state should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens, and that the state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary, intervening in or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends" (p. 10). This philosophy led to the post war economies being characterized by "market processes and entrepreneurial activities that were surrounded by a web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment that sometimes restrained but in other instances led the way in economic and industrial strategy" (p. 11).

Harvey (2005) positions neoliberalism as a reaction and fight against these emergent post war regulations: "the neoliberal project is to disembed capital from these constraints" (p. 11) or "strip away the protective coverings that embedded liberalism allowed and occasionally nurtured" (p. 168). Within these historical contexts of neoliberalism, its claim of progress and best practices should be questioned more closely.

Progress and efficiency: championing private markets.

After detailing the history and purpose of the neoliberal project, Harvey (2005) turns his attention to characterizing the neoliberal state. Central to this characterization is the ideal that "privatization and deregulation combined with competition, it is claimed, eliminate bureaucratic red tape, increase efficiency and productivity, improve quality, and reduce costs both directly to the consumer through cheaper commodities and services and indirectly through the reduction of the tax burden" (p. 65). In this contrasting of public versus private markets, Harvey articulates how neoliberal ideals demonize public goods by questioning

their quality and modes of control (red tape) while championing private markets because of associated increased efficiencies and productivity.

This positioning of private versus public markets as a debate about efficiency and productivity and its associated ability to maximize production fails to address two significant problems that private markets cannot address. These are what economists refer to as spillover costs and public goods. Spillover costs, often called externalities, can be thought of as the costs associated with production of goods and services that are caused but not borne by the producer (O'Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2001, p. 134). In other words, a coffee farm that is burning a rainforest to increase farmland is not bearing the cost of the pollution brought on by the burning, nor the cost of global warming associated with the destruction of rainforests. The same would be true with a chemical plant that is polluting a river or a coal plant causing acid rain. In each case there is a cost generated that the manufacturer does not have to pay. Wright (2008) talks about the cumulative problem of these unaccounted-for costs:

> Monetarism's great fallacy is to assume that the world is infinite and growth can therefore be endless. It takes no account of human and environmental costs or of long term limits. Deregulation is just what it says it is: a free-for-all to grab the most in the shortest time. Globalization is a feeding frenzy. Its 'efficiency' is measured only in the short term and by criteria that ignore depletion, pollution, waste disposal, social harmony, and public health. The supposed 'rights' of capital trump those of sovereignty, ecology, labour—and future generations. (p. 207)

Public goods are those that are both "available for everyone to consume" and are "impractical to exclude people who do not pay" (O'Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2001, p. 310). While there is value to these goods, because it is impractical to exclude non-payers, there again is no way for private markets to produce them. Consider such examples as clean air and universal health care. In the case of clean air, it is self evident that since we cannot charge people for the air they breathe there is no way for private markets to value clean air; we must create regulations and have pollution controls. Regulating air pollution is simply good

commonsense. Universal health care is a bit more complicated. U.S. president Obama's recent address on health care (2009) did in fact address the issue of universal health care as a public good. The public good aspect of his argument had to do with the unnecessary costs borne by all insurers for the medical care costs of the uninsured who frequent emergency rooms because it is the one place they cannot be refused treatment. Because it is also the most expensive place to treat a patient, we all bear the cost of these visits; thus, universal health insurance would create the public good of decreasing overall medical expenditures and lowering insurance costs for everyone.

Individualism: the locus of responsibility.

Neoliberal ideology champions individual responsibility and asserts itself as being a sociopolitical structure that is based on the idealized notion of meritocracy—that is, individuals are able to achieve whatever they desire dependent only on their commitment to hard work and ability to produce something of value. Herbert Walberg and Joseph Blast (2003) state that: "Capitalism allows for greater inequalities in incomes, but it is profoundly egalitarian. Its institutions protect the equal rights of consumers and producers, deny privilege and authority to the powerful few, and distribute wealth based on each participant's contributing to satisfying the needs of others" (p. 104).

They also characterize increasing U.S. wealth discrepancies (discussed in the next section) in the following manner:

> To the small extent that the rich got richer faster than the poor during the last two decades of the twentieth century, it was largely because the poor chose to work fewer hours when they could afford the basic necessities of life, whereas middle- and upper-income workers chose to continue working and reaped rewards for doing so. (Walberg & Blast, 2003, p. 105)

Harvey (2005) describes the underlying philosophy that leads to this reasoning as a belief that "while personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her actions and well being" (p. 65). He highlights that this individual responsibility pertains also to education, a belief reflected in the ideals of a

meritocracy where each person is responsible for their own level of success (or failure). Harvey captures this sentiment in the assertion that "individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing in oneself significantly enough in one's own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as the class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism)" (pp. 65-66).

Harvey (2005) also contends that this position of individual responsibility is self-serving for the elite. For instance, in talking about the twenties and the ensuing economic depression Harvey observed that: "The upper classes, insisting on the sacrosanct nature of their property rights, preferred to crash the system rather than surrender any of the privileges and power. In so doing they were not oblivious to their own interest, for if they position themselves aright they can, like good bankruptcy lawyers, profit from a collapse while the rest of us are caught most horribly in the deluge" (p. 153). As we watched the worldwide financial meltdown of 2008 and the ensuing U.S government bailout of banks, these ideas resonated.

Increasing economic disparity.

Edward Wolff (1994) finds that median wealth growth dramatically exceeded mean wealth growth in the 80s (see p. 171) but did not in the 60s and 70s (see p. 172). He asserts that this difference between mean and median wealth reflects the fact that "99% of the real wealth growth accrued to the top 20% of households" (p. 171); whereas, "the bottom two quintiles actually showed an absolute decline in their average real wealth holdings" (p. 171). The time period coincides with the beginning of neoliberal policies under Ronald Reagan.

Robert Haverman and Wolff (2004) further examine the plight of the lower quintiles of American households. In this analysis, they find that the number of households living in a state of "asset poverty" (defined by not having the resources to meet three months living expenses at the poverty line) increased from 22.4% to 24.5% (p. 145), demonstrating that the unprecedented wealth creation of the late twentieth century had no impact on the bottom 25% of

Americans. "Blacks/Hispanics" and "female heads with children" subgroups experienced rates nearly double the average (p. 165).

Economist James Galbraith (1998) analyzes this issue from the standpoint of income discrepancy. The opening paragraph of his book asserts that "the gap between good and bad jobs, about what can be earned in America in decent as compared to mediocre employment...has grown, and now is wider that at any other time since the Great Depression" (p. 3). Furthermore, he contends that this gap "has come to undermine our sense of ourselves as a nation of equals" and "rising inequality presents a stark challenge to American national life" (p. 3). He associates this growth with the fall of Keynesian economics and the rise of supply-side policies (see pp. 199-212). Neoliberalism advocates supply-side economics.

Decreasing mental well-being.

Scholars of critical pedagogy contend that economics should not be the sole determinant of measuring the progress, health, and well being of either individuals or a society. Kincheloe (1998b) refutes the idea that we are living in a time of "progress" or "best practice for human well being" or some sort of nirvana like state that signifies the "end of history." As evidence of this falsity, Kincheloe (1999b) cites a variety of psychology pathologies that seem to be ever increasing—e.g., the doubling of depression each decade, the startling statistics about the frequency of anxiety disorders (see pp. 4-5)—and connects this troubling increase in mental issues with what he calls "the negative psychological impact of market-driven capitalism with its commodification of desire and its destruction of community" (p. 5).

The debate about the health of a society should not be a simplistic economic argument. Appreciating this complexity further undermines the neoliberal fixation with analyzing GDP and its growth as a singularly important factor and serves to refute claims based blindly on its analysis. Combined with Wright's earlier reflection concerning the destructive eventual endpoint of growth and progress, the economic problems associated with neoliberal ideology become

ever more clear. Yet, as Aaron Gresson (2004) points out, many of us are caught in a capitalist trap:

> We are implicated in life; we take and we give. We eat to live, and in this act sacrifice others. Under capitalism, in the type of democracy we have attained to date, the symbolic and substantive consumption of others is inevitable. We, moreover, are only partly motivated—and, even then, under duress—to be otherwise. Enron, Anderson, WorldCom, and Martha Stewart stand as only the tip of the iceberg of our guilt, greed, destructive proclivity. We blanch at the personal losses perpetrated by Arthur Anderson and the Enron Empire, yet we daily watch to see whether our own stocks—personal value—will suffer. And we pray for a quick, complete recovery of the Dow Jones. (pp. 119-120)

Connecting neoliberalism and education: instrumental rationality.

Because neoliberal ideology relies on assessing markets based on efficiency and productivity, it creates a model hyper-focused on measurement of outcomes in order to develop the best practices that will lead to greater efficiency and productivity. In education this leads to analyzing schools, curriculum and pedagogy as if "all phases of such a process depend on an instrumentally rational concern with the measurable results of particular strategies" at the expense of asking "the worth of raising the scores, the tacit view of intelligence embedded in them, the educational and political side effects of viewing their improvement as the primary goal of teaching" (Kincheloe, 1990, p. 145).

The emergent tenets of instrumental rationality and critical pedagogues' view of its impact on education can be seen in Henry Giroux's book: *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life*. Giroux (1998) asserts that the critical pedagogical vision of democracy and citizenship focuses on the transformation of public space. He traces the origin of this vision to the citizenship education movement as conceptualized by social reconstructionists of the 1930s and 40s. He contrasts this movement, which was based on "not merely informing people or giving them critical skills," but also "making choices based on ethical

considerations and moral concerns" (p. 10), with the New Right and neoliberal ideologies of the 80s that define the nature of citizenship in terms of developing a "mastery of procedural tasks devoid of any commitment regarding what is democratically just or morally feasible" (p. 14). This characterization of separating skill development from end purposes is an example of what Kincheloe refers to as instrumental rationality.

In a more recent example, Kevin Kumashiro (2008) characterizes 21st century schools and their reliance on this instrumental rationality as being hyper focused on "standards, accountability, sanctions, and choice" (p. 28). He explains:

> Leaders in education should know right from wrong and should prescribe what all students should learn (that is there should be standards). Students, teachers, and schools should not be given assistance that can function as a crutch but, instead, should be treated equally and held accountable to reach the same standards and demonstrate that they have done so by way of standardized measures (there should be accountability). Schools, teachers, and students should be disciplined when they go wrong and fail to meet standards, as with cuts in funding to schools, loss of autonomy for principals, and denials of promotion or graduation for students (there should be sanctions). Parents should be able to protect their children from such dangers as lazy peers, unskilled teachers, or immoral school environments, and should have the choice of moving their children to other better schools (there should be choice). (pp. 34-35)

This passage clearly reflects key tenets of neoliberal ideology and its focus on instrumental rationality. For instance, there is no room to question where the standards came from or whose interests they serve, they are merely "known" by educational leaders. Instead the focus is on developing procedural systems that can ensure students attain these measures. Furthermore these procedural measures directly reflect principles of private markets such as sanctions, choice and a focus on individual responsibility. Analyzing texts to understand how they reflect (or don't) neoliberal ideology is central to my analysis of media coverage of charter schools.

A Critical Perspective on Mainstream Intelligence Theories

Overview and importance.

In the following section, I review the roots of our modern understanding of IQ as it dates back to its initial construction by Alfred Binet (Binet and Simon, 1907; 1913) and is articulated by Lewis Terman in the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales (1916) and then summarized by Charles Spearman (1927) who posits that *g* can be understood "to be a factor which enters into the ability of measurements of all kinds, and which is throughout constant for any individual, although varying greatly for different individuals" (p. 411).

I define the current era of intelligence theory as starting in the early 1980s with Jay Gould's (1981) critique of the conservative position in *The Mismeasure of Man*, and then Howard Gardner's (1983/1993) offering of a liberal alternative in his book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. These books serve as the backdrop to the conservative response which I understand as trying to reaffirm traditional views of intelligence. This viewpoint is championed in the Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) book *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. Both the conservative and liberal positions will be challenged by Kincheloe and Steinberg's (1993) initial conceptualization of postformalism. I detail important aspects of postformalism in chapter 3.

Theories of intelligence have important implications for education as they shape ideas about curriculum, testing, pedagogy and purpose; therefore, they are central to my critical analysis of the media coverage of charter school reform. As I review theories, I begin noting their potential impacts. In chapter 3, I explicitly discuss them in greater detail.

The historical era.

There is widespread agreement that the modern field of intelligence has its origins in the work of Alfred Binet (Gardner, 1983/1993; Sternberg and Detterman, 1986; Lohman, 1989; Flanagan, Genshaft et. al., 1997; Howe, 1997; Cianciolo and Sternberg, 2004). The original tests were designed "to identify children who did not have the public capability to benefit from standard

educational practices" (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004, p. 34). These ideas were made popular for American use by Lewis Terman and renamed the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, more commonly known as IQ (Ciancolo & Sternberg, 2004; Gould, 1981/1996). This early work is acknowledged as the basis for viewing intelligence as an innate, stable, identifiable trait (Callahan, 2000; Gould 1981/1996). Its methodology is critiqued for relying on correlation studies between tests and school/professional success rather than emerging from a formal definition or theory of intelligence (Howe, 1997).

The research around intelligence was next dominated by the work of Charles Spearman who, in 1927, wrote the landmark book *The Abilities of Man*. As earlier noted, this book affirmed the existence of a singular *g* that could be understood as *the* factor which accounted for the correlations between all of the variety of tests being used to measure intelligence. Spearman (1927), like Terman before him, believed that factor analysis proved that this measure of intelligence was both stable over time and could be understood to be responsible for variations in levels of human ability on a variety of different constructs. Both mainstream progressive and non-mainstream critical scholars agree that this reliance on using factor analysis as the cornerstone of evidence for the causality of a central construct, *g*, is a fundamental flaw with the research (Gould 1981; Gardner, 1983/1993; Sternberg, 1996; Howe, 1997).

Following the work of Spearman, L.L. Thurstone published two books, *Vectors of the Mind* (1935) and *Multiple Factor Analysis* (1947). These books mark the beginning of what I refer to as mainstream progressive thinking about human intelligence, that of its multiplicity. According to Gardner (1983/1993), Thurstone's work was the beginning of a more sophisticated understanding of intelligence, one that recognized that not all mental faculties could be correlated to a singular *g* but perhaps there needed to be a model that included multiple layers in order to understand intelligence. In contrast, the mainstream conservative response to Thurstone's work claimed that: "Special abilities failed either to predict educational outcomes better than general ability or to predict

which students would benefit from specialized educational interventions designed to fit their particular patterns of abilities" (Lohman 1989, p. 334).

These conflicting positions define the general parameters of the mainstream debate between conservative and progressive understandings of intelligence: whether intelligence should be narrowly defined as a general characteristic or whether it should come to be understood to contain a multiplicity of factors. What both share in common is that they continue to focus on understanding human intelligence as a causal predictor of individual performance on a variety of tasks dependent on mental functioning. This historical debate shapes the modern testing landscape.

The current era.

Overview.

My interest in the contemporary era of intelligence theories begins with the early 1980s publications of *The Mismeasure of Man* (Gould, 1996/1981) and *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 1993/1983). I use the 1996 republication of *The Mismeasure of Man,* with its revised introduction and additional chapters added as a response to *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). The first book serves as a progressive critique of the conservative position; the second as the most popular progressive alternative. *The Bell Curve* represents a conservative response to these two 1980 books. Combined, these works will serve to outline the conservative and progressive positions. As evidenced by its origins in the historical era, this debate between the conservative (single g theory) versus progressive (multiplicity of intelligence theories) is not new. In fact, as Gould (1996/1981) asserts in his work: "the basic form of the argument never goes away and recurs every few years" (p. 23). Thus, the importance of both Gardner's and Herrnstein and Murray's books is perhaps not the novelty of the ideas but the widespread reading of this work.

In contrast to these positions, I review a series of books by Kincheloe, Steinberg, and others, specifically *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered* (Kincheloe, 2004b), *Rethinking Intelligence: Confronting Psychological*

Assumptions About Teaching and Learning (Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Villaverde, 1999), *The Post-Formal Reader: Cognition and Education* (Steinberg, Kincheloe, & Hinchey, 1999) and *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction* (Kincheloe, 2008). These books reformulate Gould's critiques of the conservative position (as well as introduce additional critiques Gould does not consider) to analyze the shortcomings of Gardner's progressive theory of multiple intelligences. The combination of Gould's critique coupled with Kincheloe and other critical theorists will shape the critical response to both the mainstream conservative and mainstream liberal positions. Taken together these critiques serve the additional purpose of forming the foundation of a critical alternative to mainstream theories of intelligence: postformalism.

      The conservative/progressive common ground (and a critical departure).

      Lohman's (1989) assertion that most scholars deal with the mainstream conservative progressive continuum either by narrowing their definition of intelligence and trumpeting its singularity (the conservative *g* position) or by allowing for its complexity by embracing some form of its multiplicity (the progressive position) captures the mainstream continuum of this debate. Others characterize progressive forms of intelligence theories as "attempting to create a single model or theory that, while it rejects the primacy of a singular g, embraces the goal of attempting to capture all of what is meant by the term intelligence as it is commonly used" (Sternberg, Lautrey & Lubert, 2003, p. 18). This assertion reveals how, even within the context of acknowledging a multiplicity of intelligences, progressive scholars are still attempting to create a comprehensive theory. This quest for comprehensiveness drives much of the similarity between the liberal and conservative perspective, both in its theory and in its eventual pragmatic implications. In addition to Sternberg and Gardner's work, other progressive scholars have also attempted to expand the conversation about intelligence by trying to address other closely related domains that *g* does not seem to adequately capture. These efforts include work on defining other mental functions that seem similar to intelligence. An apt example of this would be the work of Peter Salovey (1998) on emotional intelligence (1989). This concept

gained widespread notoriety with the publication of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (1995). As Gardner (2003) points out, all of these conceptualizations of intelligence share in their definition and approach the idea of studying intelligence as what he terms "individual difference" (p. 46), meaning that we should study models of human intelligence as differentiators from one person to the next.

Gardner (2003) does acknowledge two other potential conceptualizations of intelligence. The first is as a "species characteristic" (p. 44), meaning what is it about the species of man that differentiates man from other species. The other he labels as "intelligence as fit execution of a task or role" (p. 48). In defining this concept of intelligence he asserts that the context within which a task is being performed and the expectations for the performance must be considered.

This claim of intelligence as differentiator is one of the basic assumptions challenged by the theorists of postformalism. One of the assertions is that all people seem to have much more in common when it comes to intelligence and that the appearance of difference can be more appropriately linked to analyses of power and how power blocs operate to define intelligence in ways that reflect the practice and ideologies of the elite (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993; Kincheloe, 1999). A second assertion of postformal scholars will have to do with the contextual nature of intelligence (Gardner's third option). The contextualization of intelligence begins to hint at a wide array of concepts such as John Dewey's (1938) assertion that learning must be connected with everyday experience, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) exploration of the social nature of intelligence and Francisco Varela's (1992) idea of enactivism, amongst others, all of which Kincheloe (1999a) incorporates into his conceptualization of postformalism.

Gould's critique of the conservative position.

Gould (1981/1996) has two important critiques of conservative theories of intelligence: 1) the tendency to reduce, reify and then rank complex phenomena, 2) biodeterminism. He also comments about how these two issues combine to have profound negative sociopolitical consequences in terms of oppression along lines of class, sex, race, gender or other axes of power. This analysis purposefully

does not focus on the scientific basis of his critique (which details the flawed methodologies of factor analysis and unsupportable claims of causality), because the pragmatic implementations that result from these beliefs are most relevant for this discussion. This connecting of scientific frames to its actionable results is tantamount to the issue of how intelligence theories impact schooling.

In general terms, Gould (1981/1996) critiques conservative theories of intelligence as suffering from four maladies: "reductionism, or the desire to explain partly random, large-scale, and irreducibly complex phenomenon by deterministic behavior of the smallest constituent parts…; reification, or the propensity to convert abstract concept (like intelligence) into a hard entity…; dichotomization, or our desire to parse complex and continuous reality into divisions by two…; and hierarchy, our inclination to order items by ranking them in linear series of increasing worth" (p. 27). With respect to intelligence and intelligence theory, he specifically outlines how conservative views begin with the process of reductionism and reification:

> We recognize the importance of mentality in our lives and wish to characterize it, in part so that we can make distinctions among people that our cultural and political systems dictate. We therefore give the word "intelligence" to this wondrously complex and multifaceted set of human capabilities. This shorthand symbol is then reified and intelligence achieves its dubious status as a unitary thing.
>
> Once intelligence becomes an entity, standard procedures of science virtually dictate that a location and physical substrate be sought for it. Since the brain is the seat of mentality, intelligence must rest there. (p. 56)

Gould (1981/1996) then asserts that this reification and reductionism naturally leads to ranking, which subsequently requires "quantification, or the measure of intelligence as a single number for each person" (p. 56)—what conservative theorists name *g*.

Gould (1981/1996) also critiques traditional conceptualizations of intelligence as suffering from biodeterminism. While Gould acknowledges that

intelligence emerges as a complex interaction with both genetic and social components, he rejects their assertion that the question of what component of intelligence is attributable to each (meaning assigning percentages of weight to the relative effect of nature versus nurture) is an interesting and important question for science to purse. Specifically, Gould rejects Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) claim about the importance of intelligence's "permanent and heritable" differences, instead making a case that what matters more is the "flexibility" of expressions of intelligence (pp. 34-35). He asserts that this distinction has profound consequences on how we interpret human behaviour.

> Advocates of narrow and broad ranges [of intelligence] do not simply occupy different positions on a smooth continuum; they hold qualitatively different theories about the biological nature of human behavior. If ranges are narrow, then genes do code for specific traits and natural selection can create and maintain individual items of behavior separately. If ranges are characteristically broad, then selection may set some deeply recessed generating rules; but specific behaviors are epiphenomena of the rules, not objects of Darwinian attention in their own right. (p. 359)

Gould (1981/1996) goes on to explicitly connect the mistakes of biodeterminism and reification, reduction, and ranking (and the emergence of popular doctrines such as *The Bell Curve* which popularize this mistake) with the sociopolitical.

> Resurgences of biological determinism correlate with episodes of political retrenchment, particularly with campaigns for reduced government spending on social programs, or at times of fear among ruling elites, when disadvantaged groups sow serious social unrest or even threaten to usurp power. What argument against social change could be more chillingly effective than the claim that established orders, with some groups on top and others at the bottom, exist as an accurate reflection of the innate and unchangeable intellectual capacities of people so ranked. (p. 28)

Gresson (2004) comments about Herrnstein and Murray's conservative view of intelligence: "telling white people that it's OK to feel what they feel, that

science validates their cognitive and moral superiority to others" (p. 12). This use of intelligence as a way to rationalize public education's replication of societal stratification has important implications for the dialogue about educational reform.

Connecting The Bell Curve *and neoliberalism.*

Examining the sociopolitical arguments put forth in *The Bell Curve* connects the Herrnstein and Murray's view of intelligence with ideals of neoliberalism that I have already discussed. This connection is a central point in my analysis of understanding how these twin pillars, the macro ideological one of neoliberalism and micro biological one of intelligence theory, combine and reinforce each other in creating the hegemonic *zeitgeist* that critical pedagogy asserts frames oppressive school practices.

In their opening chapter, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) describe modern day social hierarchies as being characterized by "the emergence of a cognitive elite" (p. 25). They position this evolution within the evolution of changing world power structures that they assert is moving from "ancient lines of separation based on hereditary rank" (p. 25) to "a world segregated into social classes defined in terms of money, power and status" (p. 25). This modern world they contend is quickly giving way to the next stratification of peoples "in which cognitive ability is the decisive dividing force" (p. 25). In characterizing this change they go on to state that in this new order: "Social class remains the vehicle of social life, but intelligence now pulls the train" (p. 25).

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) describe this change as evolutionary progress, a move towards efficiency, and inevitable—all characteristics connected to neoliberalism. While they do not state it so simply, it is easy to infer from their description that we are quickly approaching a sort of best practices for social stratification just as neoliberalism was characterized as a best practices for human well-being. These characterizations serve to limit discussion of alternatives since it would be pointless to discuss resisting the inevitable, especially if it can be characterized as progress. This progress is captured by their claim that the evolution to modern times of social hierarchies is now at least based on the

genetic luck of cognitive ability and no longer dependent on the class and/or power of parents. The following quote captures their sentiment.

> Modern societies identify the brightest youths with ever increasing efficiency and then guide them into fairly narrow educational and occupational channels. These channels are increasingly lucrative and influential, leading to the development of a distinct stratum of social hierarchy, which we hereby dub the Cognitive Elite. The isolation of the best and the brightest from the rest of society is already extreme; the forces driving it are growing stronger rather than weaker. Governments can influence these forces but cannot neutralize them. (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, p. 25)

 Herrnstein and Murray (1994) also connect cognitive ability with societal ills, specifically claiming that "poverty" (chapter 5), "low levels of schooling" (chapter 6), and "unemployment, idleness and injury" (chapter 7) each can best be understood by appreciating the role that IQ and genetics play in determining the likelihood that an individual will be susceptible to such a state of affairs.

In making these claims, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) lay the foundation for rejecting a social responsibility model for either education or the economic stratification of society and instead see it replaced with the claims that these are just inevitable states that we as a society have evolved towards, leading them to conclude:

> Group differences in cognitive ability, so desperately denied for so long, can best be handled—can only be handled—by a return to individualism. A person should not be judged as a member of a group but as an individual. With that cornerstone of the American doctrine once again in place, group differences can take their appropriately insignificant place in affecting American life. But until that cornerstone is once again in place, the anger, the hurt, and the animosities will continue to grow. (p. 550)

This rationalization of individualism connects their understanding of intelligence with neoliberal ideology. This similarity provides a striking example of the connection between the ideological macro sociopolitical ideals of

neoliberalism and the micro, biological individual theory of intelligence theory that helps shape the framework of "common-sense" of mainstream schooling against which critical pedagogy will call for alternatives.

Progressive conceptualizations suffer the same shortcomings.

Gould's critique of the progressive position is twofold: the tendency to reduce, reify, and then rank as well as the misattribution of causality based on the premise of biodeterminism. Implicit in Gould's (1981/1996) explicit exemption of Gardner's work from this critique is that Gardner has avoided these shortcomings by multiplying the singular concept of g into his framework of multiple intelligences. But is this indeed true? Does Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences avoid the trap of reducing, reifying and ranking? And if Gardner, like conservative positions, does reduce, reify, and rank, does he then also suggest a level of misplaced biodeterminism that will potentially (and some would argue unavoidably) serve to create oppressive frames for conceptualizing education? Critical scholars address these questions in *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered* (Kincheloe, 2004a).

In the opening chapter, Kincheloe (2004b) acknowledges that he (and others) initially responded positively to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. He characterizes the initial positive reaction as being "impressed by the challenge he [Gardner] issued to traditional psychology," particularly as it "facilitated the inclusion of students from marginalized groups whose talents and capabilities had been mismeasured by traditional psychological instruments" (p. 3). Kincheloe recognizes that MI introduced a number of important critiques to mainstream conceptualizations of intelligence, including that: "learning is contextually situated; different communities value different forms of intelligence; cognitive development is complex, not simply a linear cause effect process; creativity is an important measure of intelligence; psychometrics does not measure all aspects of human ability; teaching grounded on psychometrically inspired standardized testing is often deemed irrelevant and trivial by students" (p. 4).

Despite this promise of multiple intelligences, Kincheloe (2004b) contends that Gardner's work falls short of re-conceptualizing intelligence in a

way that would lead to a transformative pedagogy and, instead, shares many of the oppressive characteristics of traditional mainstream theories of intelligence. Specifically, Kincheloe (2004b) asserts that MI can be: "antidemocratic; supportive of an abstract individualism; epistemologically naïve; subversive of community; insensitive to race and socioeconomic class issues; patriarchal, Western colonialist; [and] Eurocentric" (p. 7).

For this analysis, I focus on two main issues: 1) understanding the critique of MI's championing of abstract individualism in the context of Gould's earlier accusation of the conservative position's propensity to reduce, reify and rank, 2) examining how MI's championing of certain concepts of intelligence (and not others), even in its multiplicity, continues to manifest oppressive structures along axes of power such as race, class, gender, and global position. This analysis demonstrates how this progressive theory remains similarly problematic as the conservative one with regards to a true democratization of intelligence theory.

MI theory ignores considering the individual's relationship to power when conceiving of intelligence as an individual biological trait. For instance, one of the obvious ways this power operates is to impact the motivation of privileged versus marginalized students in starkly different manners. As Kincheloe (2004b) notes "the poor child will find it harder to discern the relationship between educational effort expended and concrete rewards attained than will the upper-middle-class child. Such perceptions will lead to different levels of performance shaped by the relationship to dominant power in its everyday, lived world manifestations. Such motivational and performance levels have little to do with innate intelligence" (p. 8). This basic assertion—that motivation will be impacted by perceived rewards and that levels of motivation will interact with perceptions of intelligence—is missing from Gardner's focus on intelligence as being simply an innate biological trait. While Gardner (1983/1993) does contend that intelligence can be impacted by the environment (for example his discussion of music immersion programs, such as Suzuki Talent Education program), he fails to acknowledge the varying probability of impact such programs are likely to have depending on a student's aforementioned relationship to power.

Gardner (1983/1993) also allows power to influence his decision about which specific behaviours exemplify intelligence. Multiple examples of this faulty decision-making are cited by authors in *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered* (2004a). For example, Donald Blumenthal-Jones (2004) points out the Gardner's selection of criteria for identifying genius is marred by its narrow selection criteria that is "replete with culture icons" (p. 126). Yosef Progler (2004), in discussing musical abilities, offers a similar critique:

> Gardner's theory is about revving the same old visually oriented, elitist musical canons of Western civilization that have alienated most ordinary people from doing their own musicking. Although notation does not play a major role in "core musical applications," to me, Western music in general, by way of notation, transfers music from the right to left side of the brain, where it can be read as text, but which also disables the primordial musicking instincts that all humans seem to possess. (pp. 49-50)

Thus Gardner's conception of multiple intelligences falls into the trap of championing an individualistic conception of intelligence (exempt from the social political power-laden context in which the particular conception of intelligence is developed or in which individuals who display [or do not display] such intelligence) as well as the neoliberal championing of individualism reminiscent of the conservative conception of intelligence. Progler (2004) characterizes how this reification is transformed into an education setting with similar consequence as more conservative views: "While Gardner insists that the various intelligences can be merged together in life and in education, the discourse of multiple intelligences reifies intelligence into separable entities, each testable and isolatable" (p. 49). Once this reification of intelligence happens, even in its multiplicity, it then manifests itself into a focus on individualism that was central to the critique of the conservative position. Kincheloe (1999) describes this process (with its grounding in these mainstream theories of intelligence) and its impact on educational practice:

As a science of competition, modernist cognitive psychology shifts analysis from different kinds of mental performances to qualitative differences in performance. With this shift of perspective educational psychologists become identifiers and predictors of difference in ability and success, thus pitting students against one another. In the context 'g' takes on a reality, an independent existence of its own that is worth fighting to acquire—a phantom that is imbued with the power to divide us around cultural and psychological lines of demarcation (p. 33).

Kincheloe (2004b) contrasts this neoliberal championing of individualism with his own theories of social connectivity. The interdependence of these contrasting ideological frames of society and their interdependence on frames of intelligence and intelligence theory are captured in the following passage:

Human beings in Western liberal political thought become abstract bearers of particular civil rights. If individuals are relational, context-embedded beings, however, these abstract rights may be of little consequence. A critical complex ontology insists that individuals live in specific places with particular types of relationships. They operate or are placed in the web of reality at various points of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, geography and other continuums. Where individuals find themselves in this complex web holds dramatic power consequences. Their location shapes their relationship to dominant culture and the cognitive psychology that accompanies it. In other words the intelligence—whether described as 'g,' musical, bodily kinesthetic, or linguistic—psychology deems them to posses profoundly depends on the contextual power-inscribed placement. A prime manifestation of Gardner's ontological alienation involves his lack of recognition of the dramatic effect of these dynamics on the very topics he has written about over the previous two decades (pp. 22-23).

With this recognition, the very same shortcomings plaguing Herrnstein and Murray's work surface in Gardner's (i.e., the reification of intelligence as a biological, individual construct that is measurable and thus testable) resulting in

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schools becoming places whose function is to sort students by ability. Kincheloe (2008) addresses the significance of this position in his book *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction*, connecting his theories of intelligence, with his conceptualization of knowledge, and his vision of critical pedagogy. He states that "in the political context, mainstream cognitive psychology often confuses socio-economic privilege with high intelligence and socio-economic marginalization with incompetence" (p. 20) thus "modernist positivist educational psychology maintains that individual marginalization is a result of personal incompetence" (p. 21). Here again is the recurring connection between the neoliberal desire to champion individualism reinforced by the biological, individualistic mainstream conceptualizations of intelligence.

Conclusions

Neoliberal ideology and mainstream (both conservative and progressive) theories of intelligence should be considered problematic because of their tendency to rationalize and replicate (rather than challenge) societal stratification through the championing of instrumental rationality and individualism. As I detail in the next chapter, postformalism and critical pedagogy offer an alternative.

CHAPTER 3

Postformalism, Critical Pedagogy, and the Purpose of Schools

This chapter develops an understanding of postformalism to ground the analysis of how critical pedagogy conceptualizes school practices and purpose. I use this critical pedagogical frame to challenge the commonsense frames shaped by neoliberalism and mainstream intelligence theories. The juxtaposition of these frames is central for my analysis of the media coverage of charter schools.

A Critical Theory of Intelligence: Postformalism

Overview.

In "A tentative description of post-formal thinking: The critical confrontation with cognitive theory," Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993) introduce postformalism. They also name its importance:

> The way we define thinking exerts a profound impact on the nature of our schools, the role teachers play, and the shape society will ultimately take. As we delineate the following characteristics of post-formal thinking, each feature contains profound implications for the future of teaching. Indeed, the post-formal thinking described in the following section can change both the tenor of schools and future of teaching. (p. 301)

Understanding postformalism is integral for understanding critical pedagogy and understanding a critical pedagogically informed view of educational reform. Postformal scholars (I use this term from here forward to describe scholars whose work reflects tenets of postformalism) also answer Dewey's (1939/1997) century-old call for new models of education needing to develop a philosophy of their own, avoiding what he describes as "the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively" (p. 20).

I review the conceptual frameworks of a number of critical authors as they appear in three important books, *Rethinking Intelligence: Confronting*

Psychological Assumptions About Teaching and Learning (Kincheloe, Steinberg & Villaverde, 1999), *The Post-Formal Reader: Cognition and Education* (Steinberg, Kincheloe & Hinchey, 1999), and *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction* (Kincheloe, 2008).

One challenge with critically re-conceptualizing intelligence theory is appreciating that this challenge fundamentally rejects the mainstream views of intelligence as an individual trait that can be isolated, quantified, and studied. This critique is significant because it maintains that not only are particular characteristics of mainstream intelligence wrong (because of such things as limiting socio-cultural bias), the conceptual framework of intelligence as a causal trait is wrong. Mainstream theories of intelligence cannot simply be substituted by an alternate definition of intelligence; the foundational idea of intelligence as an individual, measurable, causal trait must be challenged.

In order to reflect this change, I change the language that I am using to talk about intelligence and intelligence theory. Instead of referring to the noun *intelligence*, I use the active phrase *intelligent ways of thinking and being*. The following discussion of postformalism clarifies the reasoning behind this change in language.

Defining characteristics.

Postformal scholars redefine intelligence as a social phenomenon (both in its construction and in its enaction). This critical re-conceptualized view of intelligence rejects the mainstream premise that intelligence can be conceived as a causal thing, responsible for individual levels of mentality. Postformal scholars contend that the difference between the viewpoints cannot be characterized as a debate along some sort of neat continuum. The difference is not about percentages of the importance of individualism but rather, a qualitative difference where this rejection of causation and individualism results in a fundamentally different conception that changes the very nature of how we view intelligence and intelligence theory's impact on teaching, learning, and the purpose of schools.

Conceptions of postformalism use this position as a starting point in formulating an alternative. Postformalism then recognizes a number of assertions

about intelligent ways of thinking and being that differentiate it from mainstream conceptualizations:

1) Postformal scholars reject the "formal" of formal reasoning. Specifically, postformal scholars reject the contention that complex phenomena can be best understood by parsing complex phenomena into simple discrete parts in a vain attempt to understand the whole as a collection of discrete parts with some sort of simple, linear causality.

2) Postformal scholars recognize the importance of living with ambiguity (both of meaning and of causal relationships) as well as the temporal nature of both intelligence and knowledge.

3) Postformal scholars recognize that intelligence is learnable.

4) Postformal scholars appreciate that human intelligence and intelligent behaviour must recognize the role of the intuitive and emotional in addition to the intellectual as important in shaping cognition and behaviour.

5) Postformal scholars recognize that intelligent human behaviour is based not only on purposeful, planned, reflective behaviour but also on immediate coping—a form of intelligent action Francisca Varella (1999) names enaction.

6) Postformal scholars incorporate ideas of well-being into its conception of how it conceptualizes intelligence and intelligent ways of thinking and being in the world.

These characteristics can be organized in the following manner. Characteristics 1, 2 and 3 (moving back beyond formal reasoning, recognizing the ambiguous and temporal nature of knowledge, and recognizing intelligence as learnable) serve as both additional rejections of mainstream intelligence theories as well as foundational assertions of postformalism scholars. Characteristics 4, 5, and 6 (the recognition of the intuitive and emotional as important for understanding, the appreciation of enaction, and the consideration for the importance of well-being) serve as examples of additional (meaning in addition to the hyperational logo centrism) aspects of mentality that postformal scholars

incorporate into theories of intelligent thinking and ways of being. These three particular aspects of intelligent ways of thinking and being have particular importance for understanding school practices and purpose.

Moving back beyond formal reasoning.

"Back beyond" is used in deference to Kincheloe's (1999a) contention that modern conceptions of formal thought have not always been the hegemonic norm but instead began with and rely on modern scientific ways of reasoning that came to be during the western enlightenment period (see p. 6). He characterizes formalism as dependent on "an acceptance of a Cartesian-Newtonian mechanistic worldview that is caught in a cause-effect, hypothetical-deductive system of reasoning" (p. 19). He further asserts that "formal operational thinkers accept an objectified, unpoliticized way of knowing that breaks an economic or educational system down into its basic parts in order to understand how it works. Emphasizing certainty and prediction, formal thinking organizes verified facts into theory" (p. 19). It is this formal scientific rational conception of thinking which postformalism rejects. In its place, postformal scholars embrace an epistemology where the "mechanistic cause-effect universe morphs into a domain of reciprocity and holism" where "reciprocity refers to the relationship between the knower and known" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 211).

Postformal scholars reject both the linear causality of formal reasoning as well as formal reasoning's proclivity to understand complex phenomena as a sum of discrete parts. In this rejection of the formal epistemology of positivism, postformal scholars thus open the door for inclusion of additional ways of knowing and being in the world.

Intelligence's ambiguous and temporal nature.

Postformal scholars recognize that intelligence and intelligent ways of thinking are both ambiguous and temporal. This somewhat ephemeral notion of intelligence emerges from recognizing intelligence's contextual nature and its social construction (the second point in my earlier critique of traditional measure of intelligence). As context and social construction never remain the same between people and at different points of time, so intelligence and intelligent

ways of being cannot be considered as a static entity. The implication is that ideas about intelligence and intelligent ways of being must be constantly challenged and renegotiated (in contrast to the mainstream views' tendency to reify and measure). Kincheloe (1999a) captures this temporal nature with his assertion about how future anthropologists may consider mainstream conceptualizations of I.Q.

> In many ways an I.Q. test, for example, works better as a cultural artifact than as a measurement of some innate mental ability. Through their analysis of I.Q. tests, future cultural anthropologists might gain profound insights into the nature of success in the late twentieth century, what individuals and groups were more prone to be successful, and how knowledge was produced in this era. (p. 43)

Recognizing intelligence as learnable.

Critiques of theories of intelligence reject biodeterminism, replacing it with what Gould characterized as an appreciation of biological potentiality (1981/1996). This switch leads to a fundamental change with regard to conceiving of intelligence as learnable in meaningful ways. As discussed earlier, mainstream intelligence theories contend that, for the most part, intelligence is a relatively stable measure of human cognition; we cannot, by definition, learn intelligence, it is something we either have (or do not have) in varying degrees. Postformal scholars reject this position in its stead, asserting that:

> Postformalism does not accept cognitive hopelessness and is grounded on the idea that intelligence is learnable and can be taught, in the workplace, in civic organizations, and any other place where people interact. As a psychology of empowerment, postformalism promotes the highest level of understanding possible. (p. 8)

This rejection of cognitive hopelessness leads critical pedagogues to reject the necessity of oppressive social stratifications that, as discussed earlier, can be the logical end point for accepting mainstream theories of intelligence with their assertion of biodeterminism.

Valuing emotions and intuition.

Appreciating the significance of emotion for intelligence and intelligent ways of being is not a new idea. When introducing the importance of the intuitive to postformalism, Kincheloe (1999a) begins by reminding the reader that "logo-centrism (reason centeredness) began to develop with the scientific revolution (the Age of Reason) in the 17th and 18th centuries that considered intuition and emotion incompatible with male centered logic" (p. 6). The erasure of emotion from inclusion in our conceptions of intelligence and intelligent ways of being was an act of formalism. Postformal scholars reject this erasure, contending that "From a critical perspective, emotion is one of the many ways we know the world; thus, it is not the antithesis of reason. The relationship is one of partnerships, not antagonism" (Kincheloe, 1999a, p. 7).

Patricia Hinchey (1999) further explores the importance of understanding the relationship between emotion and intelligent ways of thinking and being. She asserts that formalism's scientific approach to researching education has served to undermine our appreciation for the social complexity of teaching and learning: the "determination to divide the teaching/learning experience into researchable components and the accompanying view of teaching/learning as a mechanical process generated an educational worldview that routinely denied the complexity of human experience" (p. 131). In the rare case that emotions are acknowledged, they are seen as something that needs to be fixed in order to facilitate a more efficient learning process. As an example, Hinchey points out that "if a student is angry or anxious about a grade or class," teachers are expected to "go to work showing him as illogical—rather than exploring whether there are things (unfair testing, humiliation by teachers and peers, inadequate school supplies) he might be legitimately angry or anxious about" (p. 133).

In addition to embracing emotion as important to intelligent ways of thinking and being, postformal scholars explicitly embrace intuition. Kincheloe (1999a) contends "unlike modernist positivist linear analysis, post-formal intuition perceives qualitative relationships that emerge from structures so deep that a previously-unseen inner coherence emerges" (p. 26). He concludes by

asserting that "Post-formality provides a socio-cognitive context that allows individuals to move from a formal ingenuity that serves the purpose of puzzle solving activities to an intuitive perspective that uncovers puzzles to solve in the mind's journey into the unknown" (p. 27). This ability to move beyond current conceptual ways of thinking, to transcend what is already known, is a focus of postformal thought, and lays in stark contrast to a formalist approach that seeks not so much to transform knowledge as to build upon it.

As postformal scholars incorporate emotion and intuition into a theory of intelligent ways of thinking and being, what emerges is a more holistic theory. That is, our understanding of intelligence comes to embody not just the scientific, rational, causal process of linear thinking, but instead intelligence theory is reformulated to recognize that the totality of a person cannot be meaningfully segmented into individual separate parts.

Recognizing enaction.

Enaction is a theory that understands spontaneous, context-specific, coping action as a form of intelligence. For example, enaction allows for the inclusion of the earlier discussed concept of musicking which mainstream intelligence theories had no way to recognize. In *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition* Francisco Varella (1999) introduces the concept of "enaction," arguing that the vast majority of ethical behaviour should be understood not as "rational judgment" but as "spontaneous coping" (p. 6). Like critical theorists, Varella realizes that modern times have been dominated by the positivist turn of western science and its aim of seeking an objective truth. He characterizes this truth-seeking as being defined by a search for the "abstract" maintaining that most mainstream conceptions of knowledge and cognition have been characterized by an attempt "to find our way to the rarefied atmosphere of the general and the formal, the logical and the well defined, the represented and the foreseen" (p. 6).

Varella (1999) cites numerous examples of cognition as enaction in our routine daily tasks such as eating lunch with a friend or engaging in work at the office. He contends that human behaviour can be understood as a series of

"micro-identities" acting in "micro-worlds" (p. 10). He maintains we have sets of learned behaviours appropriate (or not) for each perceived social situation. Thus the role of perception, Varella (1999) writes, is central for enaction: "In the enactive approach reality is not a given: it is perceiver dependent, not because the perceiver 'constructs' it as he or she pleases, but because what counts as a relevant world is inseparable from the structure of the perceiver" (p. 13). This daily work of navigating our worlds with effective behaviours should be central to our study of cognition, rejecting the more traditional definition that focuses on willful, deliberate reflection as the highest level or most important measure of cognitive functioning (p. 18).

Varella (1999) does not completely reject deliberative, reflective action as an important component of cognition; instead, asserting that its status should not be elevated at the expense of also recognizing the importance of enaction. He characterizes the two components of cognition as being co-dependent.

In the context of understanding the importance of both cognitive models, Kincheloe (2007b) incorporates ideas of enaction into his conception of postformalism. Enaction's impact is multi-dimensional. Kincheloe (2007b) articulates some of these dimensions in the following statements:

"Students don't manifest intelligence by developing efficient mental file cabinets for storing data; it [enaction] tells us that various knowledges are important as we discern their meanings and relationships and become empowered to use them in the improvisation demanded by particular circumstances" (p. 18).

"Intelligence is no longer equated with the ability to solve pre-given and well structured problems. In an enactivist context, it involves the ability to construct frameworks of understanding that resonate with and extend the insight of others" (p. 19).

"Definitions of intelligence and even ethical action do not amount to much if they are merely abstract principles that are separated from the necessity of figuring out what to do in immediate situations" (p, 19).

With this appreciation of enactivism, Kincheloe begins to capture how this theory of intelligent thinking and intelligent ways of being begin to take shape. His description of enactivism's impact on postformalism helps illustrate the need to articulate postformalism's theory of intelligence with the language intelligent thinking and intelligent ways of being, rather than mainstream conceptualizations of g (or multiptle gs) as some mechanistic central processing unit.

Incorporating well-being.

In Kincheloe's (1999b) introduction to postformalism, he contends that one of the current failures of mainstream psychology (with its reliance on mainstream intelligence theories) has created what he labels a "socio-psychological schizophrenia" (p. 6). Specifically, this schizophrenia creates the purposeless nature of school where students "discern no direction in the everyday meaning of education" and "their emotional health is irrelevant" (p. 8).

Postformal scholars reject mainstream intelligence's theories fixation with the rational in favour of a more holistic appreciation of human beings; they demand that psychological health (both of the individual and of society) becomes important to understanding theories of intelligent thinking and being. To achieve this goal:

> Post-formal thinking is concerned with questions of meaning, self-awareness, and the nature and function of the social context. Such concerns move post-formal thinkers beyond formalist concerns with proper scientific procedure and the certainty it must produce. Post-formalism grapples with purpose, devoting attention to issues of human dignity, freedom, power, authority, and social responsibility. (Kincheloe, 1999b, pp. 21-22)

By explicitly incorporating issues that have to do with the well-being of the individual and society at large, postfomal scholars' conception of intelligent ways of thinking and being connect intelligence with humanity in a manner that explicitly connects conceptualization of meaning making with its potential impact on our lives and the lives of others. Thus postformal scholars connect thinking with being: a link Kincheloe talks about in his various discussion of critical

ontology (2007a, see p. 33; 2007b, see pp. 26-28; 2004a, see pp. 22-23; 2008, see p. 43). He defines the shift of his critical ontology as a shift in thinking that rejects formalism's (and mainstream intelligences') conception of "abstract individualism" in favor of what he describes as "a more textured concept of the relational individual" (Kincheloe, 2004a, p. 22), asserting that: "As an ontological being I don't stand alone in the world, abstracted from social and political forces. I am inseparable from such forces—where they end and I begin is a blurred line" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 43). This ontological stance of relational being furthers the critique of mainstream intelligences lack of contextual awareness.

Kincheloe (1999a) connects this theory of relational self to his critique of mainstream schooling and his alternate conception of what a critical education would necessarily entail: "obsessed with details, with bits and pieces of knowledge, schools in a contemporary era miss what should be the first step of schooling—the search for personal meaning and its connection to one's passion for life and learning" (p. 11).

Building a Critical Foundation for Analyzing School Reform

  Literature Overview.

  The following understanding of critical pedagogy and tenets of critical educational reform emerge from the previous critiques of neoliberalism and mainstream intelligence theories as well as this discussion of postformalism. This understanding of critical pedagogy informs a critical foundation for analyzing school reform by connecting these discussions to tenets of how scholars from within critical pedagogy envision schools, specifically with regard to two questions: What does enacting a critical pedagogy entail? What is the purpose of schools? These questions are central for my analysis of the media coverage of charter schools.

  Critical pedagogy.

  Origins.

  While problematizing pedagogy from critical perspectives (specifically those that analyze power and positionality) has historical roots throughout the 20th

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century history of education critiques, Critical Pedagogy as a named discipline can be understood to formally begin with Henry Giroux's 1984 book *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition.* In this book Giroux (1984) begins to draw together the work of Paulo Freire and his vision of education as a transformative practice and critical social theory's analyses of power, structure, capitalism, hegemony, etc. This explicit bringing together of critical educational philosophy and critical cultural analysis is the foundation upon which the last 35 years of scholarship in critical pedagogy rest.

Key ideas.

Since that time, scholars within critical pedagogy have further explored the antecedents of the field, articulated specific tenets of school philosophy and practice, and explored beliefs about intelligence and knowledge. For a brief summary of this scholarship and a brief introduction to the field, I use the book *Critical Pedagogy* (Kincheloe, 2008c) in which the author asserts that critical pedagogy is committed to a number of key ideas. School practice and school reform must be based on considering the purpose of school and that, in critical pedagogy, this purpose must begin with analyzing issues of justice and equality. Furthermore, since issues of justice and equality are social, cultural considerations, education is an inherently political enterprise whose primary purpose should involve alleviating human suffering; therefore, an analysis of school and school reform must begin with the most basic assertion that schools must not harm students.

In beginning to explore issues of curriculum and the roles of teachers and learners, Kincheloe (2008c) asserts the importance of generative themes and a problem posing process of education where teachers are researchers charged with developing curriculum appropriate to the needs and context of their students and that this curriculum cannot be separated from its impact on changing the lives of its students or of the society in which they live.

Critical pedagogues' description of current school practice.

Since critical pedagogy asserts itself as a critique to current practices, understanding how critical pedagogy views current school practice is an important starting point. The following description is a good example:

Teaching and learning usually takes place in a four walled classroom where students sit for most of the period, working out of shared books or writing on shared topics or engaging in shared experiments. Teachers are expected to know more than the students, determine what students are supposed to learn, structure the class in such a way that students learn what they are supposed to learn, and then assess whether they learned it, with exams and assignments. Students are expected to follow instructions, work hard, and do homework in order to learn what they are supposed to, and the grade, score or rank with which they end up is meant to reflect the degree to which they succeeded. Framed as common sense in education, this is what many people take to be what 'real' schools look like.

(Kumashiro, 2008 pp. 4-5)

Embedded within this quote are many of the most common characteristics critical scholars attribute to mainstream education.

With regard to **purpose**, the second-to-last sentence of the quote "and the grade, score or rank with which they end up is meant to reflect the degree to which they succeeded" is the most important. This statement highlights the fact that the outcome of our schools is students who are categorized by grade, score, and rank. Since this outcome is then used to determine whether they graduate and, if they graduate, how likely they are to be allowed to continue in their schooling by [in?] the next level of school, this statement reflects that at least one purpose of schools is to provide a sort of academic sorting function.

With regards to analyzing the **pedagogical philosophy,** this analysis best starts with looking at how Kumashiro depicts the roles of teachers and learners and the role of curriculum and testing. From these descriptions, conclusions about a theory of pedagogy can be drawn. With regards to the **roles of teachers and learners**, Kumashiro's quote provides a clear description of teachers who are in authoritative control—"determin[ing] what students are supposed to learn,

structur[ing] the class in such a way that students learn what they are supposed to learn, and then assess[ing] whether they learned it—juxtaposed with students who are obedient subjects—"expected to follow instructions, work hard, and do homework in order to learn what they are supposed to." With regards to the role of **standards and testing**, Kumashiro's repetitive focus on using the word "shared" to describe the books, topics and experience on which student learning is focused is important. By "shared" Kumashiro means the same both in the sense that within a typical classroom, students are usually working on the same thing as well as in the sense that within a school, school district, state or country, students within the same classes are essentially assumed to be working on the same things. These things are presumably standards and curriculum. Similarly, he implies that the grades and rank of students should somehow be transferable again between schools, districts, states and throughout the country. That is to say schools have enough in common that standards and testing can be applied evenly throughout. Combining these ideas, we see a pedagogical philosophy emerge where teachers are responsible for ensuring students learn a common skills and knowledge.

John Dewey (1938/1997) characterizes this type of education as follows: "The subject matter of education consists of a subject matter and of skills that have been worked out in the past; therefore the chief business of school is to transmit them to new generations (p. 17). This process requires that "the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity and obedience" and that "teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct are enforced" (p. 18). Paulo Freire (1970/200) describes this process as "the banking concept of education" (see pp. 71-86). Critical pedagogy emerges in contrast to this conception of teaching and learning.

Descriptions of schools from the viewpoint of neoliberalism and advocates of mainstream intelligence theories.

But is this critique accurate? How do advocates of neoliberal ideology or conservatives views of intelligence describe education?

Walberg and Bast (2003) describe effective school practices as being characterized by "courtesy, fairness, and respect…a clear mission for

learning…an academic curriculum taught well to the whole class…a student notebook of assignments and notes for each subject…homework for completion and grading each day" (p. 23). They cite the fact that these characteristics "comport well with the traditional common sense of many lay people, most notably parents" (p. 23) as evidence of their importance. They also champion the "importance of scholastic achievement" especially in "reading, mathematics, and science because these subjects are more internationally comparable than , say, civic, history, geography, or literature" and "are also particularly important for active citizenship, higher education, and the workforce" (p. 9). This description of good schools and championing of standards resonates with Kumashiro's earlier descriptions.

Herrnstein and Murray (1994), champion the sorting function of schools. They contend that schools fail to be able to do much for students with low cognitive ability: "for the foreseeable future, the problems with low cognitive ability are not going to be solved by outside interventions to make children smarter" (p. 389). Their belief in biodeterminism (as discussed earlier) leads to their conclusions that schools should stop wasting time focusing on students who are below average, contending that, in the latter half of the twentieth century, "Because success was measured in terms of how well the average and below-average children performed, American education was dumbed down: Textbooks were made easier, and requirements for courses, homework, and graduation were relaxed" (p. 417). They propose a resetting of priorities: "We urge primarily not a set of new laws but a change of heart within the ranks of educators. Until the latter half of this century, it was taken for granted that one of the chief purposes of education was to educate the gifted—not because they deserved it through their own merit but because, for better or worse, the future of society was so dependent on them" (p. 418). In this mandate we see embedded a call for the types of standard curriculum and standard testing that Kumashiro earlier described.
As a path towards this type of educational reform, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) suggest a neoliberal approach (market based, dependent upon individual control and responsibility). This approach focuses on making sure students learn a set of

skills and knowledge whose origin is not questioned or reflected upon. In avoiding critical pedagogical questions (e.g., Who determines the knowledge we should learn? Whose interest does it serve?), Herrnstein and Murray create a non-reflective position that fails to consider the oppressive nature of power.

Implementing a critical pedagogy.
Teaching and learning.

The contrast between critical pedagogical styles and mainstream education has its origins in Paulo Freire's foundational work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In chapter two of this work, Freire outlines the framework of these contrasting styles and labels them as "banking" versus "problem-posing" education. In his analysis, Freire (1970/2000) asserts that students are objectified by a teaching and learning process that is controlled by teachers. Teachers are objectified by this teaching and learning process as they become controlled by the curriculum and standards to which their students will eventually be assessed. In analyzing the student teacher relationship within the context of this type of learning, Freire (1970/2000) states that:

> A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside of school, reveals its fundamental narrative character. This relationship involves a Narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness. (p. 71)

In contrast, Freire's "problem-posing" education replaces the traditional teacher student relationship with one markedly different. The following quotes reflect his emerging belief about the teaching and learning process. These beliefs form the foundation of critical pedagogy as it emerges over the next forty years.

- o Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that

both are simultaneously teachers and students. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 72)

- o Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student and students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire 1970/200 p. 80)
  - ▪ The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 77)
  - ▪ In this process arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid. (Freire, 1970/2000,p. 80)
  - ▪ The students—no longer docile listeners—are now co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 81)

Freire (1970/2000) connects these views of teaching and learning to his views of cognition:

Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferals[sic] of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors—teacher on the one hand and students on the other. (p. 79)

In their introductory article to postformalism, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993) explain this connection between these competing theories of education and their beliefs about intelligence and knowledge.

Viewing cognition as a process of knowledge production presages profound pedagogical changes. Teachers who frame cognition this way see their role as creators of situations where students' experiences could intersect with information gleaned from academic disciplines. In contrast,

if knowledge is viewed as simply an external body of information independent of human beings, then the role of the teacher is to take this knowledge and insert it into the minds of students. Evaluation procedures that emphasize retention of isolated bits and pieces of data are intimately tied to this view of knowledge. Conceptual thinking is discouraged, as schooling trivializes learning. Students are evaluated on the lowest level of human thinking—the ability to memorize without conceptualization. Thus, unless students are moved to incorporate school information into their own lives, schooling will remain an unengaging rite of passage into adulthood. (p. 301)

In this passage, Freire's characterization of banking education are evident. Also evident is Kincheloe and Steinberg's understanding of what problem-posing education could entail: "Teachers who frame cognition in this way see their role as creators of situations where students' experiences could intersect with information gleaned from academic disciplines."

Standards and testing.

Freire (1997) explicitly rejects deficit models to describe cultural differences. This rejection is shared by current scholars and forms a central component of the critique of standards and testing. For example, Jim Cummins (2003) asserts that:

In virtually every country histories of education reveal a systemic and usually intentional process whereby dominant groups have organized the structure of educational provision in ways that construct the human differences that children bring to school—differences in race, class, culture, gender, language—as deficits that are invoked as explanation of these children's poor academic performance…. The school failure of subordinated or marginalized group students is attributed to the alleged intrinsic characteristics of the group itself (genetic inferiority, parental apathy, bilingualism, etc.) or to social and educational programs that are designed to serve the interests of the group (e.g., affirmative action, bilingual education, etc.). (p. 41)

In offering an alternative Cummins (2003) suggests that:

> A central proposition is that the ways in which identities are negotiated between educators and students is at least as fundamental in determining student achievement as any myriad techniques for teaching reading or any other academic content. Only teacher-student interactions that generate maximum identity investment on the part of students, together with maximum cognitive engagement, are likely to be effective in promoting achievement. (p. 51)

This rejection of difference as deficit is replaced by an embracing of the importance of the student teacher relationship—which he later goes on to describe as one that needs to prioritize "promoting collaborative relations of power" rather than "reinforcing coercive relations of power" (Cummins, 2003, p. 52)—further articulates Freire's student-teacher relationship and his commitment to rejecting marginalizing competing constructs of knowledge. Additionally, Cummins' focus on identity development resonates with Freire's ideas about *conscientization*.

The book *American Standards: Quality education in a complex world, The Texas Case* (Horn & Kincheloe, 2001), analyzes the Texas standards movement that former president Bush oversaw during his time as governor. This analysis of standards is particularly important as it was used as a blueprint for the now federal education law: No Child Left Behind within which charter schools operate.

In Horn's (2001a) discussion of standards, he talks about the importance of evaluating the impact of educational policy, not simply its intent. He details the importance of this difference:

> How change is managed often subverts the intent of change. Whether the goal is to develop critical thinking skills in all students, or to increase the academic achievement of disenfranchised groups, the potential success of the change in accomplishing the goal depends upon the interpretation and implementation of the goal by the stakeholders in the system. In a hierarchical system, in which those at the top have rigid control, require success, deny stakeholder participation in the design of the system and policy decision making, a mechanical and reductionist (focusing on parts

instead of whole) process is created that actually works against intended outcomes. (p. 81)

Horn (2001b) articulates how the standards, while in theory intended to help minority students, had the unintended consequence of increasing student attrition (see p. 163). In explaining this outcome, Horn (2001a) explicitly connects the technical standards movement with an affinity with Freire's banking model of education (see p. 81) as well as with the propensity of standards to replicate oppressive structures of power by "oppression of minority cultures by the cultural majority" (p. 82). While Horn (2001a) recognizes that standards do not have to have these effects, he contends that, at least in the Texas case, they do. From the standpoint of promoting critical educational reform, Horn (2001a) argues that what is important is to recognize the difference between what he calls "technical standards" and "standards of complexity" (p. 83).

Horn's "standards of complexity" are characterized as being sensitive to a systems analysis of education that includes looking at the importance of community, conversation, and post-formal thinking—particularly as post-formalism is informed by etymology, patterns, process, and contextualization (see pp. 83-91). While there is not time here to discuss the implication of each of these components, Horn's (2001a) discussion of community is a good example.

With the addition of a community lens, questions can now be raised, such as, What kind of school community do we want to develop that can appropriately respond to a multicultural society? What impact will certain kinds of standards have on this kind of school community? (p. 84)

In asking these questions Horn (2001a) asserts "The interrelationship of standards, community and multiculturalism is critical due to the impact that all three have on the construction of knowledge, values and identity in children" (p. 84). And in this statement is evident a critical awareness, a critical awareness that realizes standards can never be seen as objective, but must be analyzed to understand in whose interest they operate and to what ends they are likely to serve.

Curriculum.

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Other scholars have explored how a more critically conscious pedagogy impacts curriculum and decisions around issues of curriculum development. For example, Dennis Carlson (1998) contrasts the technocratization of a banking model of education with the demands of a more critical pedagogy.

Carlson (1998) asserts that, "While individualization implies the technical predetermination , rationalization, and routinization of the learning process compatible with a top-down control, personalization implies a curriculum that is not totally determined in advance, that is open to modification in classroom practice, and that is more concerned with higher-order critical thinking skills than with the acquisition of sets of reductionistically defined basic skills" (p. 111.) This description of curriculum mirrors the difference between an objictification of intelligence as a thing and knowledge as facts with the critically conscious analysis that rejects these objectifications. Carlson (1998) also characterizes the impact of a predetermined curriculum.

> While teacher's work is deskilled through individualization of the curricula, it is also, and in a related way, both 'cheapened' and made more sustainable. For, as the curriculum is teacher proofed through rationalization, teachers themselves become more interchangeable and substitutable as units of instructional labor. Experience in the craft of teaching becomes less essential and therefore devalued by the system. (p. 108)

Carlson (1998) points out that "In organizing work activities—whether in the factory, office, or classroom—systems models suffer from one overriding dilemma: greater control over the point of production is achieved only at the expense a further alienation of workers from system goals" (p. 109). This alienation is reminiscent of Freire's "narrative sickness," (although it focuses on the impact of banking methodology has on teachers; whereas, Freire focused on the impact on students). Carlson (1998) asserts that a more critical pedagogy would mean "more discretionary power over the actual organization, content, and evaluation of classroom lessons. It also means more time for teachers outside of

the self contained classroom, working on various committees in the school and community to help plan and revise the instructional program" (p. 112).

Elliot Eisner (1994) connects this view of curriculum to instrumental rationality.

> Furthermore, the mandate to operationalize aims has the effect of frequently restricting the aims of teachers in curriculum development to those for which a technology of measurement is available. If such a technology is absent, the likelihood of relinquishing valued aims increases. The ability to measure becomes a formidable restraint on what teachers come to believe they ought to do. (p. 163)

Eisner (1994) further explores what he characterizes as "the most insidious impact of the belief that aims must always be clear and measurable" (p. 163):

> What counts as intention? Must an intention be capable of linguistic formulation? Is it necessary that aspiration one seeks be stateable in discursive language? Given the admonition that teachers state their objectives behaviorally, it appears that objectives that cannot be articulated in discursive forms are not objectives. Such a view is naïve on several counts. (p. 163)

According to Eisner (1994) the ways in which these views are naïve are twofold: 1) aims are often "images" that cannot be accurately captured in discursive language (p. 163); 2) intention does not always precede action (see p. 165). His conclusion of this analysis is to embrace the idea that "how one teaches and what one teaches are inextricable connected" (p. 165) leading to a model of curriculum and curriculum planning that is a circular process, always informing, and informed by, teaching and intentions. This kind of complexity resonates with both Freire's conception of problem-posing education (in which teachers remain open to engaging in a learning process with students) as well as ideas of postformalism (which rejects simple linear causality).

   Additional considerations.

Postformal scholars' recognition of the importance of enaction, emotion, and well-being also informs teaching practices. As their importance does not neatly fit in the previously discussed categories, they are addressed separately.

Enaction.

In "Thinking otherwise and hearing differently: enactivism and school mathematics," Brent Davis (2004) connects the teaching process to theories of enaction and discusses what it means to teach outside the constrictions of a traditional curriculum, embracing instead a Freireian notion of allowing learning opportunities to emerge.

> The emphases from an enactivist perspective are on attending situations, looking for opportunities, participating in the unfolding of events, being aware of the complex webs of relationships in which learning occurs, and recognizing one's complicity in personal and collective knowings. In short teaching is largely a matter of embracing the 'hap'. (p. 336)

Davis (2004) also talks about the importance of listening, a necessary component of any dialogical model of teaching and learning

> In my own research, this foregrounding of happenstance has come to be expressed in the phrase, "teaching as listening," where listening is offered both figuratively and literally. Figuratively, listening offers a powerful alternative to the metaphors of teaching that focus on the monological (such as "transmission," "telling," "voice," or "empowerment). Listening is necessarily dialogical, intermingling of another's words with the text of my own experience. (p. 336)

Emotion.

Patricia Hinchey (1999) describes the result of "researchers conceptualiz[ing] the interaction between teachers and students as a mechanical and logical enterprise" (p. 131) as eliminating the possibility to consider "how the feelings humans bring to classroom might affect the process" (p. 132). She rejects the positivist path of removing emotion, asserting that it cannot be done and, even if it could be, the result would "likely to result in procedures that are partial, handicapped, distorted" (p. 135). Hinchey suggests we embrace emotion as a

"window of opportunity" (p. 140). Paying attention to the emotional reactions of students can result in understanding our students' lived experiences in more complex ways, a step along the path of "establishing schools as learning communities of both mind and spirit" (p. 145).

Megan Boler (1999) undertakes this challenge. She recognizes "that the control of emotions is a central and underexplored aspect of education in relation to hegemony" (p.xvii), citing as example "the competitive individualism that so often defines education fosters fear and isolation, and that these traumas are not a necessary part of education" (p.xviii). Her final two chapters, "The Risks of empathy: Interrogating multiculturalism's gaze" and "A Pedagogy of discomfort: Witnessing and the politics of fear," focus on how embracing emotion can impact teaching and learning.

Boler (1999) attempts to address "the untheorized gap between empathy and acting on another's behalf" (p. 157). She offers "testimonial reading" as a concept to transcend what she describes as a more mainstream educational practice of "passive empathy" (pp. 157-172). Testimonial reading transcends passive empathy because it "requires the reader's responsibility" (p. 158), a "responsibility, invoked and engaged by virtue of testimony being an 'action' and 'promise,' rather than a report, description, or chronicle" (p. 168). "Testimony resonates with the poststructuralist crisis of truth: Testimony denies the reader's desires for certainty; the emphasis on language as practice, as action, replaces coherence and resolution with vulnerability and ambiguity" (p. 169). In this last phrase "replaces coherence and resolution with vulnerability and ambiguity," are close connections to postformalism. The depth of engagement that this experience requires of students exemplifies the work critical pedagogy requires of students. Her final chapter further explores the challenge of learning:

> A pedagogy of discomfort begins by inviting educators and students to
> engage in critical inquiry regarding cherished values and beliefs, and to
> examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to see
> others. Within this culture of inquiry and flexibility, a central focus is to

recognize how emotions define how and what one chooses to see, and

conversely, not to see. (pp. 176-177).

This recognition that emotions define how we see the world embodies

postformalism's commitment to embracing emotion as central to ways of thinking

and being. Boler provides an important reminder that this is a central challenge of

critical pedagogy.

Well being.

Lilia Bartolemé (2009) asserts the importance of "pedagogical foundations

that serve to humanize the educational process and enable students both students

and teachers to work toward breaking away from their unspoken antagonism and

negative beliefs about each other and get on with the business of sharing and

creating knowledge" (p. 341). She describes the origins of this antagonism as

residing with the seeming widespread methods fetish of her student teachers, and

of the teaching profession in general. She says that teachers must transcend this

standard methods fetish by critically adapting practices "to create instructional

situations where teachers use teaching approaches and strategies that recognize

and build on culturally different ways of learning, behaving, and using language

in the classroom (p. 346). Only in this process can we "humanize the educational

experience of students from subordinated populations by eliminating that hostility

that confronts these students. (p. 352). Eliminating this hostility is a basic step in

caring about the well-being of students.

Maxine Greene (1999) discusses how teachers might consider approaching

students:

We cannot negate the fact of power. But we can undertake a resistance, a

reaching out towards becoming *persons* among other persons, for all the

talk of human resources, for all the orienting of education to the economy.

To engage with students as a person is to understand our own

incompleteness, our consciousness of spaces to still be explored, desires

still to be tapped, possibilities still to be opened and pursued. (p. 29)

In this remark, Greene captures both the importance of recognizing

today's educational moment (defined by its neoliberal ideology), and also the

humility of our place within it. This humility (captured in the statement "to understand our own incompleteness") coupled with a dream of the possible is a defining component of critical teachers. Her further exploration of the role of hope provides an apt transition for the final section of this work.

> We have to find out how to open such sphere, such spaces, where a better state of things can be imagined; because it is only through the projection of a better social order that we can perceive the gaps in what exists and try to transform and repair. I would like to think that this could happen in classrooms, in corridors, in schoolyards, in the streets around. (Greene, 1999, p. 29)

This call for imagining the possibility of a better world and then believing that education can be integral to the path of helping transform the world into that better place is an apt transition to the final section discussing the purpose of schools as envisioned from within the scholarship of critical pedagogy.

The Purpose of Schools: A Critical Vision of What Schools Could Do

Central to appreciating the purpose of schools is what Freire (1970/1997) refers to as an openness to history, an openness to the idea that the future is not yet determined and that education can and, in fact, should play a role in shaping it. From this belief critical pedagogy is committed to transforming society with a primary focus of addressing issues of oppression to create a more socially just, caring compassionate world.

Freire (1970/1997) characterizes banking education as serving to perpetuate historical norms of oppressive practices, specifically how education serves to shape society in ways that perpetuate the status quo:

> To achieve this end, the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus, within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of 'welfare recipients.' They are treated as individual cases, as marginal persons who deviate from the general configuration of a 'good, organized, and just' society. The oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, which must

therefore adjust these 'incompetent and lazy' folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality. (p. 74)

Or as he says later:

> The educated individual is the adapted person, because she or he is better 'fit' for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it. (p. 76).

Freire (1970/1997) contends that this conception of the educated person could not be further from the truth: "The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not 'marginals,' are not people living 'outside' society. They have always been "inside"—inside the structures which made them 'beings for others'" (p. 74).

From this assertion follows Freire's vision for the purpose of education: "The solution is not to 'integrate' them into the structures of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves'" (Freire, 1970/1997, p. 74). This process of becoming "being for themselves" Freire (1970/1997) refers to as *conscientizacao* (p. 74) and describes many times throughout his work. For example:

> Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism; it also enables people to overcome their false perception of reality. The world—no longer something to be described with deceptive words—becomes the object of transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization. (p. 86)

This call for education as means of transforming both students and the world in which students live embodies the purpose of critical pedagogy. This purpose is expressed at the level of both: 1) the individual and 2) society:

1) The purpose of education in a democratic society is more than raising test scores and fitting students to corporate needs. As we envision

them, schools in a democratic society should exist to help students locate themselves in history, obtain the ability to direct their own lives, understand the ways power influences the production of knowledge, appreciate the nature of good work, become smart workers, and connect with a cognitive revolution that leads to deeper understandings of themselves and the world. In these ways meaning is salvaged and spirit is protected—thus motivation emerges naturally as teachers and students share a sense of purpose. (Kincheloe, 1999a, p. 10)

2) Educators need to define schools as public spheres where the dynamics of popular engagement and democratic politics can be cultivated as part of the struggle for a radical democratic society. That is, educators need to legitimate schools as democratic public spheres, as places that provide an essential public service in the construction of active citizens, in order to defend them for their centrality in the maintenance of a democratic society and critical citizenry. (Giroux, 1988/1995, p. 32)

These quotes capture the vision of schools as a place where educational purpose has both an individual and collective vision. The individual connotation expressed by Kincheloe captures Freire's vision of *conscientization* and freedom—freedom from the hegemonic expressions of power that serve the interests of some at the expense of others. The collective vision, articulated by Giroux, captures a sense of community action—community action that stands in direct rebellion against the neoliberal *zeitgeist* of individualism and free markets.

These quotes also carry with them a sense of hope, a sense of hope that the world can indeed change. Giroux (1988/1995) talks about the importance of this focus:

A revitalized discourse of democracy should not be based exclusively on a language of critique, one that for instance, limits its focus on the schools to the elimination of relations of subordination and inequality…. As part of a radical political project, the discourse of democracy also needs a

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language of possibility, one that combines a strategy of opposition with a strategy for constructing a new social order. (p. 31)

This hope is the reason I have not limited these explorations to critiques of neoliberalism and mainstream intelligence theories but also sought to understand postformalism and critical pedagogy. Hope is necessary to believing fundamental change is possible and, at its core, critical pedagogy is about change: helping students change, helping teachers change, helping education change, changing the world.

Chapter 4
Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

This chapter reviews a number of important considerations that characterize aspects of and reasons behind the specific methodological decisions of this research; I wait until chapter 6 and 7 to discuss the specific application of these considerations vis-à-vis the selection and reading of the media coverage of charter schools.

Important Considerations of this Qualitative Research

For the purpose of my research, I identify four key aspects of the qualitative research methodology I embrace:

1) A commitment to understanding myself as a researcher;
2) A commitment to interrogating the foundational frames of the current social-historical context;
3) A commitment to using a phenomenologically, hermeneutically informed approach to reading, analyzing, and making meaning of the texts I review;
4) A commitment to understanding the research process as a political act.

At this point, I have completed an autobiographical narrative that I use to first understand and then share my own views and positionality as a researcher. This understanding serves to both help me as a researcher better understand my own biases and predilections as well as share them with my readers. Likewise, I have undertaken the process of explicitly identifying the foundational frames that provide the social, historical, and political context that I feel is most relevant for my research. In the next chapter, I add specificity to this macro-contextualization by reviewing the history, growth, and review of scholarly literature about charter schools and charter school reform.

First, I discuss the specific analytical strategies I use to read and understand the texts I review as well as position my research within the larger context of media and cultural studies.

Reading Texts: Identifying Themes and Making Meaning

As I begin my analysis of media coverage, I embrace the qualitative/postformal/critical pedagogical understanding that I cannot separate myself from my research. For this reason, I rely on principles of critical content analysis as informed by phenomenology and hermeneutics. Embracing this process reflects Denzin and Lincon's (2005) assertion about the importance of understanding qualitative research within its social context. They define qualitative research as being characterized by:

> a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of interpretive material practices to make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. (p. 3)

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further assert qualitative research is characterized by:

> the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study; personal experience; introspection; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives, Accordingly, qualitative researchers employ a broad range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. Hence there is frequently a commitment to using more than one type of interpretive practice in any study. (pp. 3-4)

For the purposes of the research here, I identify critical content analysis, phenomenology, and hermeneutics as important interpretive practices that inform my research methodology.

Critical content analysis.

I refer to this process as critical content analysis in order to distinguish it from traditional quantitative methodologies, acknowledging instead that the methodology detailed here emerges from a critical pedagogically informed view, a view that rejects what Carspecken (2006) terms "scientism" and defines as the idea that "all knowledge must take the form it has in the physical sciences if it is to be knowledge at all" (p. 405)—an approach that would demand "qualitative research would ask questions, collect data, and suggest answers in a way that could in principle always be translated into the vocabulary of measurable initial conditions, treatments, and outcomes" (p. 407). In this spirit a quantitative content analysis would focus on using multiple coders and statistical analysis of frequencies as well as regression (or maybe even multiple regression) analysis in order to statistically quantify (and thus verify) the existence and relationships of specific content. This type of analysis might then seek to show causal links between texts and how readers might be influenced by these texts by creating and analyzing the reactions of various experimental and control groups to various types of text. I reject "scientism" in my approach to content analysis.

What I am calling a critical content analysis instead centers around the experience and the impressions of the researcher. Steinberg (2006) describes this researcher-centered process in the following manner.

> Each film took many hours to watch and re-watch. When I felt comfortable that I had scripted enough to begin my transcriptions, I transcribed the notebooks into word processed form. Using phrases, I typed my entries down the each page as I had originally written them. After completing transcriptions of all the films, I read through the entire set of data. As I examined the complete set of scripting, themes and motifs started to emerge. As they began to repeat themselves, I wrote down my impressions of their emergence, *named* them as separate entities. After my first reading of the data, I used the colored pencils to code each theme/motif I wanted to pursue. Underlining each item with a different color, macro-themes began to emerge, as the micro-themes coalesced

under the auspices of larger themes. Analyzing all the pages of scripting, I

discovered additional themes each time. In many instances there would be

three or four different colors under a certain situation or dialogue

indicating an overlap among the themes. (p. 124)

I perform a similar process of identifying and coding content in chapters 6

and 7. Specifically, I use a multi-step process that includes: 1) Identifying types of

articles and classifying treatment of charters; 2) Collecting recurrent ideas,

grouping themes, and naming categories; 3) Re-reading: tagging for initial themes

and identifying additional ones as well as transferring information to

spreadsheets; 4) Organizing themes by categories and then reading again, tagging

for additional themes; 5) Aggregating and analyzing theme frequency. I detail the

specific of this coding analysis in chapters 6 & 7.

As Steinberg (2006) asserts, this process is heavily influenced by

understandings of phenomenology and hermeneutics.

The influence of phenomenology.

"From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to

question the way we experience the world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 5). Max van

Manen (1990) characterizes this process as being: "*systematic* in that it uses

specially practiced modes of questioning, reflecting, focusing, intuiting, etc." (p.

11); "*explicit* in that it attempts to articulate, through the content and form of the

text, the structures embedded in lived experience" (p. 11); "*self-critical* in the

sense that it continually examines its own goals and methods in an attempt to

come to terms with the strengths and weaknesses of its approach and

achievements" (p. 11); and "*inter-subjective* in that the human science researcher

needs the other (for example, the reader) in order to develop a dialogical relation

with the phenomenon, and thus validate the phenomenon as described" (p. 11).

These attributes characterize both my method to produce and the texts I produce

in chapters 6 and 7.

Kincheloe (2008b) defines phenomenology as "the study of phenomena in

the world as they are constructed by our consciousness" (p. 142). From a research

perspective, this explicit connection between known and knower creates a

disjuncture between empirical and phenomenological based research (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 78). Whereas an empirical approach would actively seek ways to remove the researcher and thus the researcher's biases from findings (by, for instance, using multiple coders and checking for inter-coder reliability) a phenomenological oriented researcher will embrace the researcher as an integral component of exploring the phenomena. Van Manen (1990) describes this difference as an attempt by the researcher to develop "a thematic understanding" that emerges not from a "rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (p. 79).

This process demands "phenomenological research projects require that we not simply raise a question and possibly soon drop it again, but rather that we 'live' this question, that we 'become' this question" (p. 43). My research here, both in my exploration of meanings of education and education reform and in my exploration of how particular media covers these issues reflects a deep commitment to living these questions. As I reflect over my graduate studies, it is these questions that I have allowed to define my experiences—influencing my course work, my research, my writing, and the evolution of my thinking and being. Thus, this research embraces the idea that phenomenological research is "always a project of someone" and as such is "always one interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer or deeper description" (van Manen, 1990, p. 31). My analysis in the following chapters emerges an organic writing process of trying to identify the important component parts of the texts as I make meaning of them.

Using hermeneutics to create meaning-making.

While my meaning making is characterized by what might be (mis)interpreted as traditionally quantitative issues of frequency and correlation, this process marks only the beginning of the hermeneutic process of my analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define hermeneutics as "an approach to the analysis of texts that stresses how prior understandings and prejudices shape the interpretive process" (p. 27). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) contend that this realization

leads to accepting that "in qualitative research, there is only interpretation, no matter how vociferously many researchers may argue that the facts speak for themselves….Not only is all research merely an act of interpretation, but hermeneutics contends, perception itself is an act of interpretation" (p. 311). In light of these assertions, the importance of the reflective study of my assumptions is evident. Given that my interpretations of this work are dependent upon my "prior understandings and prejudices" and that my "perceptions" are "interpretations" of what I see and read, the autobiographical exploration that began this dissertation takes on increased importance.

But the importance of hermeneutics does not stop with simply a disclaimer about what is possible. It simultaneously creates a path for making meaning. As Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) contend: "The hermeneutic act of interpretation involves, in its most elemental articulation, making sense of what has been observed in a way that communicates understanding" (p. 311). They describe the process in the following manner:

> Qualitative researchers familiar with critical hermeneutics build bridges between reader and text, text and its producer, historical context and present, and one particular social circumstance and another….
>
> Grounded by this hermeneutical bridge building, critical researchers in a hermeneutic circle (a process of analysis in which interpreters seek the historical and social dynamics that shape textual interpretation) engage in a back-and-forth of studying parts in relation to the whole and the whole in relation to parts. (pp. 311-312)

Furthermore, they connect the importance of critical hermeneutics with critical pedagogy in their assertion that "In its critical theory-driven context, the purpose of hermeneutical analysis is to develop a form of cultural criticism revealing power dynamics within social and cultural contexts" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 311).

In my analysis of charter schools, I detail my observations of the text in a manner that attempts to build the sort of bridges Kincheloe and McLaren describe between not only the texts studied and the reader, but also between the texts

studied and the producers of the texts, as well as between these texts and their historical and present contexts. In my narrative response, I attend to the work of cultural criticism and analyses of power. van Manen (1990) characterizes this process as being attentive to "construct[ing] a text which in its dialogical structure and argumentative organization aims at a certain effect," being conscious to not get stuck "in the underbrush," but rather, "arrive at the clearings that give the text its revealing power" (p. 33). He characterizes this process as being simultaneously attentive to both the parts and the whole (van Manen, 1990).

Hermeneutic phenomenology.

Van Manen (1990) defines a hermeneutic phenomenology as being both descriptive and interpretative:

> Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is interpretative (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there is no such thing as uninterrupted phenomena. The implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) "facts" of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even "facts" of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process. (pp. 180-181).

Van Manen (1990) characterizes this process as "fundamentally a writing activity" (p. 7). Within this definition in mind, I both write and share the analytic texts in chapters 6 and 7. These texts are characterized by the detailed tracing of my decision-making processes, the explicit naming of my observations, and the narrative responses to these observations.

Media and Cultural Studies.

Why media coverage?

As noted in my introduction, my initial interest in media coverage was spurred by my brother's characterization of local newspapers as being anti-charter

school. He claimed teacher unions were unduly influential and protective of the status quo. I was curious. This curiosity originated from my developing appreciation of claims by critical pedagogical scholars that dominant media coverage reflects neoliberal ideology and common sense understanding of schools. I believe these viewpoints conflict.

This initial interest was augmented by my readings of Noam Chomsky and his views about the ways in which the media shapes the public's understandings of important issues in systematic ways (Chomsky, 2003, 1999, 1997, 1989). In describing what he calls the propaganda model, Chomsky (1989) he states that "It is a natural expectation, on uncontroversial assumptions, that the major media will generally reflect the perspectives and interests of established power" (p. 9). He continues:

> According to this "propaganda model" –which has prior plausibility and for such reasons as those just briefly reviewed—the media serves the interests of state and corporate power, which are closely interlinked, framing their reporting and analysis in a manner supportive of privilege and limiting debate and discussion accordingly. (Chomsky, 1989, p. 10)

I was also inspired by a few examples of work that reflected what I was hoping my research might accomplish. Specifically these were documentaries about specific issues and how these issues were covered by television or film: *Tough Guise* (Katz, 1999), *Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U.S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Jhally & Ratzcoff, 2007), and *Class Dismissed: How T.V. Frames the Working Class* (Alper & Leistyna, 2005). Each of these documentaries deconstructs how media (popular and/or news) systematically portrayed a particular issue. While the end products were films, the manner in which they produced and conveyed their findings influenced my work here.

Concurrently with my interest in education reform evolving from a pragmatic understanding of education (informed by my pre-graduate school neoliberal dominated views) to a critical pedagogical view of education (that explicitly called for education to be an integral part of developing democracy), I

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was also becoming increasingly interested in the role of media in developing democracy. Herman (2007) explicitly details the connection between the propaganda model and the ability (or lack thereof) for a genuine democracy.

> Democratic media are a primary condition of popular rule, hence of a genuine political democracy. Where the media are controlled by the privileged and the elite, whether it be by government leaders or bureaucrats or those from the private sector, democratic political forms and some kind of limited political democracy may exist, but not genuine democracy. The public will not be participants in the media; instead, they will be consumers of facts and opinions distributed from above. The media will, of structural necessity, select news and organize debate supportive of agendas and programs of the privileged. They will not provide the unbiased information and opinion that would permit the public to make choices in accord with its own best interests. Their job will be to show what is good for the elites is good for everybody, and other options are either bad or do not exist. (p. 36)

Evaluating the current state of the media, Steinberg (2007) contends: "Media have become the ultimate hegemonic WMD [weapons of mass destruction] to a complacent or ignorant audience…Through television, film, advertisements, print, and the Internet, political and ideological monologues feed our heads. Most media do not engage in dialogue, merely a larger-than-life Huxleyian plasma screen that captures our attention, desire, and consent" (p. xiv).

It is both in deference to the power that the media may have and as an embrace of the impact that media critique may have that I decided to focus on the media coverage of charter schools.

Positioning my analysis of media within the larger context of cultural studies.

This appreciation for the power of media is also informed by the lens of cultural studies, specifically within the framework of how cultural studies defines and studies power. Grossberg (1997) talks about this relationship:

> Cultural studies does not reduce culture to power, nor does it claim that

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particular relations of power are somehow inherent in, or intrinsic to, specific cultural texts, practices, or relations; rather, it claims that relationship, however contingent and historical it may be, is its focus. It treats culture, then, as more than either text or commodity. Moreover, it tends to look at culture itself as the site of production and struggle over power, where power is understood, not necessarily in the form of domination, but always as unequal relations of forces, in the interest of particular fractions of the population. (p. 4)

Grossberg (1997) characterizes cultural studies research in a manner that complements the approach already discussed, specifically articulating its focus on understanding on a theoretically informed understanding on context as well as the centrality of political analysis:

Cultural studies always and only exists in contextually specific theoretical and institutional formations. Such formations are always a response to a particular political project based on the available theoretical and historical resources. In that sense, in every particular instance, cultural studies has to be made up as it goes along. Thus, cultural studies always reflects and situates itself and its claims, limits its field, acknowledges its incompleteness. (p. 9)

Despite these limitations, cultural studies has an explicit political purpose "committed to producing knowledge which both helps people understand that the world is changeable and that offers some direction for how to change it" (Grossberg, 1997, p. p. 23) Grossberg (1997) describes this knowledge production as being committed to a "discipline of contextuality" (p. 12). He characterizes this contextuality as: 1) "not empirically given beforehand; it has to be defined by the project, by the political question that is at stake" (p. 13); "strongly anti-reductionistic at all levels. It views cultural practices as the site or intersection of many possible effects" (p. 14); committed to understanding power "as organized in complex ways, along multiple axes and dimensions which cannot be reduced to one another" (p. 14); and "concerned with how relations of force (effectivity) are organized into relations of power by the discursive practices that

constitute the world lived as human" (p. 14).

This appreciation for the complexity of context and the importance of studying power further informs my appreciation for the methodological challenges and possibilities of studying media.

Why Charter Schools?

I have already detailed my personal interest in charter schools including how, through conversations with my brother, my interest has been fueled by the realization that discussions about charter schools and charter school reform provide an interesting platform to consider broader issues of school reform and purpose, specifically those introduced by considerations of postformalism and critical pedagogy.

My interest in the subject is not unique. As will be apparent in my review of charter schools in chapter 5, the charter school movement in the U.S. is growing exponentially, is an important component of the political discourse about educational reform, and is capturing the interest of the American public. Furthermore, there is an enormous body of recent research about many aspects of charter schools and their role in public education reform.

There are also two important studies specifically about the media coverage of charter schools. The first is an article published in 2006. It reviews the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC) coverage of charter schools between 1998 and 2004. Hankins and Martin (2006) use qualitative content analysis to analyze "how charter schools are portrayed in the staff editorials and in news reports" (p. 533) specifically to ascertain "whether the newspaper is advocating a position with regard to charter schools or rather simply 'reporting' on charter school activities" (p. 533). They contend that "the discourse about education reform, and, in particular, the emerging popularity (and controversy) over charter schools [is] a revealing moment in the neoliberalization of public education" (p. 532). They conclude that:

> The newspaper has challenged the traditional public education system to (neo)liberalize by endorsing and supporting charter schools, which are

themselves quasi-private institutions. This move essentially shifts a traditional state role (providing public education) towards the private or market-based sector. Despite the potential for progressive curricula and educational missions in charter schools, the structural reorganization of public education around 'choice' and privatization is not a neutral shift, but one with a decidedly ideological bent. (Hankins & Martin, 2006, p. 544)

My research here builds on these findings in three important ways: 1) I focus on media with national distribution; 2) I focus on a more recent time-frame; 3) I engage a broader spectrum of analysis.

The second study is the topic in a recent book: *Spin Cycle—How the Media is Used in Policy Debates: The Case of Charter Schools* (Henig, 2008). While the focus of the book explores how print media uses social science research, the case study used for illustration is charter schools. This study provides important background for my analysis. First of all, Jeffrey Henig's (2008) use of charter schools as a case study of media coverage validates the topic both as interesting in and of itself and as a relevant example from which insights about media coverage in general may be drawn. Second, Henig's (2008) attitudinal analysis of *The New York Times*'s articles published before 2005 provides important documentation about past coverage.

Henig (2008) centers the book around his discussion of the 2004 controversial *New York Times* coverage given to The American Federation of Teacher's (AFT) report detailing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) statistics on aggregate charter school performance as they relate to traditional public schools. The front page article "Charter Schools Trail in Results, U.S. Data Reveals" (Schemo, 2004) not only cited the research as finding charter schools students trailing their traditional public school counterparts but also suggested that the Bush administration was attempting to prevent this evidence from becoming public (Henig, 2008). In response to the article, The Center for Educational Reform (an organization supporting charters) placed a full page ad in *The New York Times* signed by 24 prominent researchers detailing

methodological weakness of the AFT study. Henig (2008) uses this back and forth as the basis for his discussion about the ways in which social science research intersects with politics as it enters the public sphere through print media.

While Henig's (2008) book focuses on the role of social science research (explicitly eliminating discussion of articles that do not cite research which form the majority of articles I detail) and comingles discussions of charters with the broader debate about vouchers and school choice, the book provides two important insights about *The New York Times*' coverage of charters. The first is the general insight that the *Times* is seen by conservatives within the choice movement as being against market-based educational reforms. The second point is his research finding supporting this viewpoint: Specifically, he finds 74% of articles reviewed (independently by two graduate assistants) as having "research discussed in a way that charter advocates would consider to be negative" (p. 187). My research findings here (which are based on a more detailed analysis of articles, inclusion of all articles rather than just those citing research, and analyze a more recent time frame) challenge this understanding.

Building on my emerging appreciation for the importance of media in supporting a genuine democratic society and the contention by critical scholars that it is failing in this role, I explore how selected national media is covering charter schools.

Accessing Ideology

Grossberg (1997) explicitly articulates the role of theory within a cultural studies project: "Cultural studies is always theoretical" and thus does not "assume that the context which it is studying is available in some directly empirical way. Theory is necessary to gain an understanding of the context because the context itself has already been constructed by theory, or at least by cultural practices and alliances, which is not to say that is in any way reducible to those theoretical or cultural constructions" (p. 20).

As discussed earlier, Foucault's methods of archeology and genealogy can help unearth "on what kinds of familiar unchallenged, unconsidered modes of

thought, the practice that we accept rest" (Foucault, 1988p. 154). I began this dissertation with a discussion of frames about educational reform. I positioned the frames of neoliberal ideology and mainstream understandings of intelligence as the ideologies that form the basis of common sense understandings of schools. I positioned the frames of critical pedagogy and postformalism as a transgressive contrast because I believe they have the power to "mak(e) facile gestures difficult" by "show(ing) that things are not as self evident as one believed" (Foucault, 1988, p. 155).

The challenge for the remainder of my dissertation is to apply this new knowledge and observe the result. Does this re-framing indeed make facile gestures difficult?

Specifically, my task is to apply these frames to an analysis of the media coverage of charter schools. But this application is not a simple endeavor. Even after having named these frames, I still need to develop a strategy for engaging these frames in a research methodology.

Because the tacit assumptions of intelligence theories and neoliberalism are just that, tacit, they do not explicitly appear in the everyday discourse and are seldom examined in and of themselves. Instead, mainstream discussions about schools and school reform tend to revolve around issues of pedagogy, particularly standards, curriculum and testing or the role of teachers and students. Understandings "theories" of teaching and learning is what allows this study to connect these concrete practices with the tacit assumptions that serve as their rationale.

In chapters 2 and 3, I developed specific viewpoints about these issues as they emerge from the two contrasting perspectives of neoliberalism and mainstream views of intelligence versus how they emerge from the frames of critical pedagogy and postformalism. I contrast these frames in the figure 1: Contrasting Theories of Education.

I analyze these assumptions as binaries, while acknowledging that the use of binaries is problematic because, informed by my understanding of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and postformalism, I reject the simplicity that binary

analysis conveys. That said, this understanding is developed as a binary in order to create a starting point of reference. Specifically, I juxtapose mainstream conceptions of education with critical conceptions of education.

Figure 1: Contrasting Theories of Education

Neoliberalism & Mainstream Intelligence Theories

Apolitical / End of history
Instrumental Rationality
Formal Causality
Individualism
Biodeterminism

Education reform as a curriculum / teaching issue
Banking Education
Standards, testing, and curriculum in high esteem
Teachers as technocratic workers
Hyper-rational view of learning

Critical Social Theory, Postformalism & Critical Pedagogy

Unresolved issues of social justice
Analysis of power as central
Causality as complex
Holistic view of society and knowledge

Education reform as a political issue
Problem Posing Education
Problematize standards, testing, and curriculum through analyses of power
Teachers as researchers
Holistic view of learning (emotion, intuition, enaction)

I use these frames to respond to the media coverage of charter school reform. Based on what a particular discourse says about school purpose, pedagogy, curriculum, testing and/or the roles of teachers and students and whether these statements/assumptions align with the critical appreciation that I have developed (or better align with what I am contending are the already held more dominant mainstream viewpoints about schools), I will draw conclusions about whether this discourse reflects conceptualizations and ideals found within the field of critical pedagogy (or serves to reinforce mainstream common sense).

For example, if an article about a charter school (or the charter school movement) claims that the way to promote equity in education is to increase the importance of standardized testing (a tenet that would support mainstream theories of education and further subvert critical educational reform), I would conclude that this article, at least in terms of how it positions standardized testing, does not contribute to a critical conceptualization of education reform. On the other hand, if an article raises questions about testing (such as whether the

material being tested is culturally biased or seeks understanding of what groups the test results might best serve), I will conclude that the article raises interesting questions that align with visions of critical educational reform.

These responses are incorporated into my analysis as my way of addressing the "bridge building" described by Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) as a central theme of hermeneutic methodology.

The Product: What does this Research Look Like?

Steinberg (2006) describes her critical cultural studies research as a reflexive, iterative process in which she watches and re-watches film, documenting her observations and reactions. She then analyses these reactions for themes. This analysis begins a clustering process in which she uses a phenomenological approach to identify the themes that emerge from her coding. She discusses these major themes as they emerge into her consciousness, using a hermeneutically informed process to generate meaning. The process she describes is multi-layered and complex. While she focuses on her own reactions, she also embraces her interpretations of authorial intention, and her understanding of the societal context of the particular issue under study. She asserts that "within this discovery and rediscovery" she finds "rigor and challenge" and that this "rigorous scripting, recording, and viewing/re-viewing (or consuming/re-consuming) is essential for critical hermeneutical research" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 123).

As I document in the following chapters, I follow a similar methodology. My analysis was written simultaneously with the process of doing my research. It serves as phenomenological text to both document my decision-making and convey my observations and reactions.

I choose to use this emergent/reactionary methodology because it reflects my engagement with the texts on multiple levels over time. I not only note the frequency of certain words and phrases and themes, but I am also sensitive to the position of the different writers responsible for them, (news reporters, editorial staff, readers responding through letters to the editor) as well as the contextual nuance of the way in which a word or phrase appears. My reading embraces a

complex coding that recognizes, while certain terms may appear neutral, their context denotes a point of view or reflects a particular attitude. As I move through my analysis, I document these observations as they lead me to increasing layers of understanding.

Employing critical hermeneutics I "focus [my] attention on the sediments of meaning and the variety of intentions that that surround social, political and educational artifacts" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 129) in order to "produce thick descriptions of social/pedagogical texts characterized by the context of its production, the intention of its producers, and the meanings mobilized in the process of its construction" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 130). Chapters 6 and 7 contain my "thick descriptions" of selected media coverage of charter schools. These descriptions not only document my observations about dominant themes, but also contain narrative responses to these observations. These reactions are explicitly grounded in my previous discussions of education and education reform as well as my review of the literature on charter schools, done next in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

An Introduction to and Brief History of Charter Schools

This chapter reviews important aspects of the history and research about charter schools, highlighting some of the concerns that emerge from my critical understanding of school practice and reform.

Importance of Contextualization

Before doing a critical pedagogical reading of the media coverage of charter schools, I first review the history of charters. This review focuses on situating their importance and identifying critical scholarly work that I believe will be most important in my analysis. This contextualization is an important component of performing a critical content analysis (Steinberg, 2011). In chapters 6 and 7, I incorporate additional literature as needed.

The Context of Accountability, Choice and "The Achievement Gap"

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) provides important contextualization for understanding charter schools. The U.S. Department of Education (2011) currently describes this legislation as having four key components: stronger accountability, more local freedom, proven methods, and choices for parents. They discuss charter schools as one sub-section of choices for parents. As will be seen in the following review of charter school literature, the tenets of stronger accountability, more local freedom, and proven methods also influence charter school implementation.

The debates about both accountability and school choice have long histories within the 20th century debate about U.S. public schooling. Feinberg and Lubienski (2008) trace the school choice debate back to Milton Friedman's 1950s call for vouchers, highlighting 1990s charter legislation as part of its more recent exponential growth. They describe the potential of choice as "promis(ing) greater equality, more innovation, more effective parental control, less bureaucracy, higher efficiency, et cetera" (pp. 16-17) but counter that with research does not

support these claims. West and Peterson (2003) trace the accountability debate to the original development of psychometric testing in the early part of the last century. They mark the 1950s development of the SAT and the 1960s development of the NAEP as being important milestones in developing data about national achievement. They highlight the 1980s *A Nation at Risk* document as "push(ing) the nation further toward accountability, principally by raising educational issues higher on state political agendas" (p. 6). They identify the next milestone as the 1994 federal law "require(ing) local schools to show, by means of tests, annual student progress toward a state-designated standard of educational proficiency" (p. 7). Finally, they cite the importance of the 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation as building on this requirement by mandating that tests be performed in grades three through eight, that these tests be made public and that schools failing to meet these requirements be publicly identified and, if they do not make progress, parents be allowed to switch schools (West & Peterson, 2008). This connection between accountability and choice forms the context in which the charter school movement continues to grow.

These debates about accountability and choice occur within the history of public schools simultaneously being perceived as under-serving certain segments of the population, particularly minority youth. According to a recent report published by the U.S. Department of Education (Vannerman, Hamilton, Baldwin & Rahman, 2009) white students statistically outperform black students in both math and reading scores in both grade 4 and grade 8. These gaps have been persistent since the studies began in 1980. This disparity in achievement has come to be referred to as "the achievement gap." Closing this achievement gap is a central goal of No Child Left Behind. There is an array of research that seeks to challenge NAEPs simplistic analysis by race. For example Carpenter, Ramirez and Severn (2006) analyze the same data using multiple regression for other variables. They find that evidence for socio-economic status, parental-involvement, time spent on homework and enrollment in ESL programs all complicate the data in statistically meaningful ways. Furthermore, they find confounding variables for urban/suburban youth and differing impacts for

Hispanic populations. They conclude that a more complex understanding of the achievement gap is necessary in order to shape effective policy decisions.

These debates about choice, accountability and disparate levels of achievement characterize the context within which charter schools and charter school legislation begins at the end of the 20th century and gains significant momentum in the beginning of the 21st.

Definition of Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that have been granted independence from many of the legislative restrictions governing traditional public schools. In exchange for this independence, charter schools are held accountable to the public charter authorizing organization, with ongoing charter renewal reviews typically mandated every three to five years depending on the state. The U.S. Department of Education (2010) offers the following definition:

> a publicly funded school that, in accordance with an enabling state statute, has been granted a charter exempting it from selected state or local rules and regulations. A charter school may be newly created, or it may previously have been a public or private school; it is typically governed by a group or organization (e.g., a group of educators, a corporation, or a university) under a contract or charter with the state. In return for funding and autonomy, the charter school must meet accountability standards. A school's charter is reviewed (typically every 3 to 5 years) and can be revoked if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed or the standards are not met.

Charter school legislation is enacted at the state level with currently 40 states as well as the District of Columbia having passed charter legislation (Public charter school dashboard, 2010). State charter school legislation can be supported with federal legislation about school funding. The most recent example of such funding is the incentives within Obama's *Race to the Top* (RTT) education stimulus funding bill for the lifting of charter school caps in order to further promote charter school growth.

Growth of Charter Schools

The first charter legislation was passed in Minnesota in 1991 (chapter 265, article 9, section 3) with the support of a democratic governor and the American Federation of Teachers. The first charter school opened the following year. In the first ten years of charter legislation (1991-2000), 31 states enacted charter legislation and over 1,600 charter schools were opened, serving over 250,000 students (Nelson et. al., 2000). By 2009, the number of charters had grown to nearly 5,000 schools serving over 1.5 million students (Smith, 2009). In terms of the total percentage of public school students served in 2000-01, 1% of students were enrolled in charters; the growth rate has doubled in the current decade: by the 2009-10 academic year, 2.9% of public school students were enrolled in charters (Public charter school dashboard, 2010).

The Vision of Charter Schools' Positive Role in Public Education

A review of charter school literature shows the dominant vision of how charter schools might positively impact public education has three key components. Among them are:

1) Increase freedom and autonomy to allow for the development of innovative educational practices within charter schools;

2) Use accountability to ensure that the freedom granted charter schools results in increased student achievement within charter schools;

3) Use competition and choice to create pressure within traditional public schools to match the performance gain of charters.

Various researchers characterize this vision in different manners. They each focus on different components of these three tenets as meeting slightly different characterizations of the status quo. For example Henig (2010) focuses on "choice and competition" as a way to "blast through the calcification of the existing educational system" in order to "substantially narrow educational gaps" (p. x); Bulkley and Fisler (2003) identify "autonomy, innovation, and accountability" as central for "improved student achievement" (p. 319); Wambe and Aschler (2003) identify "deregulation as a way to increase student

achievement for those students most poorly served by traditional public schools, that is, students of color" (p. 463); Payne and Knowles (2009) champion "flexibility within the school house," that is currently "missing from the way we organize and operate urban public schools and systems" (p. 228). Lubienski and Weitzel (2010) characterize the common ground of this assertion:

> There has been a notable consensus on the goals for charters as a reform movement: introducing competition to the school sector, promoting more equitable access to quality school options through greater choice, encouraging innovation, and thereby creating more effective and efficient school outcomes. (p. 3)

It is worth noting that these assertions all position the current system as somehow failing, focus on student achievement as a primary measure of school evaluation, and incorporate attributes of free markets as essential components of reform. Each of the three tenets is worth exploring in additional detail.

Increase freedom and autonomy to allow for the development of innovative educational practices within charter schools.

Payne and Knowles—in "Promise and Peril: Charter Schools, Urban School Reform, and the Obama administration" (2009)—characterize the freedom and autonomy of charter schools as an increase in flexibility (p. 228) and identify five key areas in which this flexibility emerges. They are: "the ability to hire and fire faculty" (p. 228), "the use of time," specifically the ability to "lengthen both the school day and the school year" (p. 229), "budgetary autonomy" (p. 230), "the capacity to test new methods of governance" (p. 230), "the insulation of charters from district policy" (pp. 230-231). They summarize the importance of these flexibilities as "free(ing) educators from the dual constraints of compliance-oriented public school bureaucracies and collective bargaining arrangements so cluttered with work rules that implementation becomes difficult, if not impossible" (p. 231).

Both of these assumptions (that charters enjoy high levels of freedom and autonomy and that this freedom and autonomy lead to pedagogical innovation) are challenged by some researchers.

Autonomy and freedom are problematized by analyzing the restrictions that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation imposes on charter schools. Stillings (2005) suggests that accountability originally posited as being dependent on state authorizing agencies and parental choice is increasingly being replaced by accountability to NCLB. Because this accountability is standards and testing based, it restricts the very autonomy that charters were designed to promote "by ostensibly limiting their abilities to provide innovative pedagogical programs, curricula, and assessments to students, parents, and communities (p. 57). Stillings goes on to reveal the irony of this accountability model: "moving the power to hold schools accountable from local to state and federal levels. (p. 59)

Researchers have also found the creation of Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) and Education Management Organizations (EMOs) limits the freedom and autonomy of charter schools. For example, Bulkley (2005) notes "the growing involvement of EMOs is a critical part of the charter school landscape and has significant potential implications for the operation of charter schools as autonomous organizations with site-based decision making." (p. 205). She asserts that EMOS, which were originally intended to "help provide schools with some of the support that they do not get from a school district" (p. 205) now raise "the possibility of new constraints on charter school autonomy" (p. 205). She notes that most powerful EMOs remove "core decisions about the educational program" from local control (p. 227). Brown, Henig, Lacirno-Paquet and Holyoke (2004) concur, noting that increasingly large networks of EMOS have charter schools characterized by "a locus of decision making outside the school and, frequently, outside the local community or even the state" (pp. 1048-1049). Additional research in this area suggests that EMOs and CMOs may negatively impact important measures of student achievement. For example, Garcia, Bulber & Monlar (2009) find evidence suggesting that the reading skill gains touted by charter school advocates may be limited to tests of basic comprehension and actually result in decreases of complex thinking skills. They attribute this phenomenon to a reliance on group instruction with a focus on standardized curricula. (NOTE: This finding of higher scores on lower order skills being

negatively correlated with scores on higher order skills reflects the earlier discussed concerns expressed by Horn about the potential negative impacts of testing.)

A second debate challenges the assumption that freedom and autonomy result in innovative educational practices, particularly with regards to classroom pedagogy. Critics maintain that there is a paucity of pedagogical innovation emerging from charter schools. For example, Weitzel and Lubienski (2010) assert that:

> While there are certainly notable exceptions (as there are in other public schools), charter schools do not generally appear to be developing new and different instructional practices to the degree that advocates had anticipated. Indeed, many charter schools have adopted classroom practices developed in the wider public or private sector, and more appear to have embraced 'basics' curricular and pedagogical practices. (p. 22)

Payne and Knowles (2009) assert there is a growing trend for charters to rely on "whole group instruction as the primary method of teaching" (p. 233). They articulate their uneasiness about this trend, characterizing its impact as a pedagogical approach that "dumbs down" teachers' work and creates a "sink or swim" environment for students (pp. 233-34).

One response to these critiques suggests that the "innovation" of charter schools should be considered outside of the narrow sense of evaluating classroom practice. For example, Lake (2008) contends that:

> Existing research shows that charter schools are doing many things differently than other public schools. While charter schools do not appear more likely to adopt entirely new instructional designs than other public schools, research shows that charters are more likely to adopt and sustain best practices, experiment with new uses of funding and governance, and repackage existing practices in new combinations. Such innovative processes and organizational tendencies may be as important as instructional innovations, per se. (p. 115).

Lake (2008) also suggests that if classroom innovation remains a legislative priority charter legislation should create "specify clear and attainable goals for charter school experimentation, reduce financial and regulatory barriers to innovation, and evaluate whether charters are meeting those innovation goals" (p. 116). This suggestion is mirrored by Stilling's (2005) suggestion that "a first step to restoring the charter school movement to its original vigor would be allowing charter schools to opt out of NCLB's testing requirements without losing Title I funding." (p. 64).

Use accountability to ensure that the freedom granted charter schools results in increased student achievement within charter schools.

The accountability model of charter schools relies on two distinct factors. The first is the idea that consumer choice will force charters to be accountable to their constituencies (parents and students); the second is that charters, because they are required by legislation to periodically renew their charters, will be accountable to the state agency in charge of this renewal (Bulkely and Fisler, 2003). In both instances critics question the operational effectiveness of these accountability systems.

The first assumption is challenged by researchers who note that charter students do not voluntarily choose to leave when enrolled in charter schools that are underperforming their traditional public alternatives. Some researchers hypothesize that these schools are meeting needs of students that are not measurable in standardized tests. For example, Garcia (2008) explores the role that segregation may play in charter school selection, suggesting that there may be a "tendency for minority students to self-select charter schools with a higher concentration of students from the same racial/ethnic group" (p. 828). Other researchers argue that the charter system, as it is being enacted, is not creating enough transparency for consumers to make wise decisions (Wells, 2002). In either case, this evidence suggests that underperforming charter schools are not being made accountable by suffering from declining enrollment.

The second assumption, that charters will be held to high levels of accountability by the charter renewal process, is also challenged by researchers.

For example, Wells (2002) argues that the same transparency about performance measures plaguing consumers at individual levels impacts the charter renewal process at a macro level:

> Charter school authorizers find it difficult to know how to relate to schools on the basis of performance rather than compliance. In short, there are now massive amounts of evidence that the systemic reform vision of charter schools and their autonomy-for-accountability trade off has not materialized. We are left with a reform that, in many cases, provides a great deal of autonomy for individual schools but little public information or feedback about what takes place within them. (p. 13)

Stambach & Becker (2006) concur, explaining the charter re-evaluation process frequently focuses solely on "compliance" issues, specifically, "how well they[charters] manage fiscal and operational responsibilities and comply with state health and safety regulations" (p. 162).

Independent of the efficacy of the charter accountability system is the question of charter achievement. Are charter school students achieving at levels higher than their peers in other schools?

This issue, while it seemingly should have a simple answer, is perhaps the most hotly debated issue between charter advocates and opponents. While each side offers compelling arguments based on individual research claims, it is more informative to consider scholars who have reviewed numerous studies and aggregate the findings. Gary Miron (2010) does this work.

Miron (2010) identifies the challenges to create controlled experiments that can make definitive conclusions about charter students' achievement relative to their peers in traditional schools. These challenges include: access to individual level student achievement data; the necessity to do longitudinal, versus cross-sectional, studies; shifting student demographics over time; creating appropriate control groups for test group comparisons; and external validity issues introduced with the site self-selection bias of the few available randomized studies (see pp. 77-83). Additionally Miron (2010) acknowledges that, even if these methodological challenges can be overcome, there are still two remaining

important issues. They are that student achievement as the sole output of effective schools is an insufficient measure for what schools do and that the use of standardized tests as the singular measure of student achievement is flawed.

With these limitations identified, Miron (2010) examines 47 studies that he deemed of sufficient quality to merit inclusion. He then categorized these studies by impact ("very negative, negative, mixed, positive or strongly positive") and "weighted by quality of design and the scope and duration of the study" in order to develop "average state and national performance levels" (p. 85). He concludes that "these findings indicate a mixed effect" (p. 86). Interestingly he notes that "studies prepared for or funded by advocacy groups are all positive or slightly positive in favor of charter schools" where as "a single study conducted by the American Teachers Federation…had negative findings" (p. 87). In contrast, "studies by independent researchers tended to have a wide array of outcomes, with some positive, but most with mixed or slightly negative findings" (p. 87).

Use competition and choice to create pressure on traditional public schools to match the performance gain of charters.

Yongmei Ni and David Arsen (2010) summarize research findings about the impact of competition and choice on neighboring public district schools. They identify 11 studies as worthy of review. Of the 11, three have negative competition effects, three find no effect and five found positive effects. They note that "where positive effects are found, they are generally quite small" (p. 115).

Similar to Myron, Ni and Arsen (2010) offer significant disclaimers about attributing causality to their results. The most significant, although by no means only research issue has to do with the inability of researchers to parse out effects that might be based on sorting (due to self-selection of charter students opting in) rather than competition. They describe this issue as follows:

> In cases where charter schools attract low-ability students, non-choosers remaining in the regular public schools probably will benefit from the departure of these students, and the estimated competitive effect will be biased upward. Alternatively, if charter schools attract relatively high-

performing students, the estimated competitive effects will be biased downward. (Ni & Arsen, 2010, p. 115)

Paynes and Knowles (2009) concur with this assessment, explaining the phenomena as at least partially dependent on the evangelical nature of some charter school operators:

> We see little evidence substantiating the early hopes that charters would, through healthy competition, spur improvements in traditional school districts…. Indeed charters often come to exist in splendid isolation from their districts, in a kind of parallel universe, with those on either side of the gulf knowing little about what is happening on the other side. The communications issues are too often aggravated by the missionary attitudes of some charter school operators, which even good people in traditional systems find off-putting. Reformers come to see themselves as saviours of those living in poverty, with no need to work in partnership with them. (p. 232)

Advocates for the potential of charter schools to impact traditional public schools through competition insist that the results will come, that the necessary scale to achieve these results has just not yet been reached (Weitzel & Lubienski, 2010). On the other hand, opponents point out that "there is little practical guidance to be found in other industries to help shed light on this divisive question. In fact, few industries exist where for-profit and not-for-profit firms operate side by side" (Hill & Welsh, 2009, p. 147). Furthermore they argue different market theories would predict multiple possible outcomes, not simply the idea that markets will increase efficiency and productivity. Specifically, property rights theory suggests cost-cutting in areas where outcomes are difficult to measure may decrease quality; labour theory suggests that in high labour intensive industries cost controls will result in more part time and less well-trained labour force potentially decreasing outcomes; market theory suggests that competition will streamline bureaucracies (leading to cost savings) and reward effective teachers, and increase student achievement (see pp. 148-149). Henig and MacDonald (2002) also contend that the impact of markets is unclear noting that:

The classical market model raises hopes that school-choice policies in general, and charter schools in particular, will have redistributive consequences that expand educational opportunities to minorities and the poor who have been ill served by conventional public education. The biased-market model raises fears that choice and charters will exacerbate existing inequities by weakening public-sector institutions that historically have been more responsive to the rights and political voice of disadvantaged groups. (p. 963)

The Current State

As summarized here, while there is widespread agreement about some of the most basic goals of charters, there is also widespread disagreement about what charters have accomplished to date or what charters may be capable of achieving in the future—both for their own students and for public education on a larger scale. While individual advocates and opponents of charters make grand claims based on the findings of their individual studies, the caution exhibited by the researchers who have taken the time to review numerous studies seems better grounded. The following quotes exemplify this caution.

When stars are in alignment, charter schools give us a means to do an end-run around inflexible and incompetent bureaucracies to give some children a better education than they would otherwise have access to. But this doesn't mean that charter schools are a panacea for the ills of urban education systems writ large. They are a good deal more difficult to do well than was originally understood; and when done well, they are difficult to scale up. (Payne & Knowles, 2009, p. 232)

Although there are still bright disputes about interpreting particular studies and trends, the overall picture is pretty clear that charter schools are no panacea for the ills that afflict the larger public education enterprise. Although we have seen some bright spots and some stellar schools in the charter movement, after two decades, the movement as a whole has so far

failed to live up to the early expectations that drove its expansion.
(Weitzel & Lubeinski, 2010, p. 220)

At their best, they [charter schools] have offered the opportunity for innovation and academic improvement for a greater number of students. At their worst, they have failed to show significant gains for all the students who attend and, equally important, they have failed to provide equitable access for all students." (Hubbard & Kulkarni, 2009, p. 186)

Charter Schools and Critical Pedagogy: Naming some Initial Concerns

Shifting this debate to contextualize it within an understanding of critical pedagogy raises the question of whether the implementation of charters is failing to embody its critical potential. The most important issue relative to critical pedagogy is of pedagogical innovation. In 2008, the U.S. government summarized its view of the charters' innovative history and potential: "they can serve as laboratories of innovation—they can be public education's 'R&D' arm. Because they have greater autonomy than traditional public schools, and since they tend to attract pioneering educators, they can try out new approaches to education that, if proven effective, can be transplanted back into the larger public education system" ("Charter High Schools: Closing the achievement gap," 2008). While this statement is certainly true of charters' original vision, numerous issues discussed here would seem to restrict the potential for innovation. Examples include the role of standards and standardized measures of assessment, the challenges to local autonomy of charters, the high regard for the role of competition, etc. Exploring how the media coverage of charters treats these issues is important.

Chapter 6
Magazine Coverage of Charter Schools

This chapter reviews the process for choosing my sample. It then reviews my coding, analysis and observations about the magazine coverage of charter schools.

Data Sample

To select my sample, I targeted magazines that were likely to contain news articles about education, politics and business and target mainstream U.S audiences. I began this search by identifying the top 50 US magazines according to distribution. I used information from MPA, The Association of Magazine Media, to determine distribution. I then reviewed this list for magazines that would be considered general news (versus tabloid, entertainment, or specific interest). For example, I included *Newsweek* and *Time* and excluded magazines such as *People*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *National Geographic*. This first list of magazines to review for articles was as follows (distribution rank in parentheses): *Time* (11); *Cosmopolitan* (18); *Newsweek* (21); *O, The Oprah Magazine* (27); *Parenting* (32); *Parents* (33); *Money* (39); *U.S. News and World Report* (49).

I then used LexisNexis (a searchable database focused on print media) to check each source for articles about charter schools between the dates of Jan 1, 2008 and Dec 15, 2009. This search resulted in identifying the following magazines as having articles about charter schools during the targeted search time. The parentheses following the magazine is the number of articles identified by Lexis-Nexis.

> *Newsweek* (18 articles)
> *U.S. News and World Report* (16 articles)
> *Time* (28 articles—Time Inc also owns *Fortune*, *People*, and *Sports Illustrated*; Of these 28 articles 15 are from *Time*, 7 from *Fortune*, 4 from *People*, and 2 from *Sports Illustrated*.

These 62 articles are the magazine component of my sample.

Methodology of Coding: A Multi-Step Process

1. Identify types of articles and classifying treatment of charters.

2. Collect recurrent ideas, group themes, and name categories.

3. Re-read: tagging for initial themes and identifying additional ones. Transfer information to excel spreadsheets.

4. Organize themes by categories. Read again, tagging for additional themes.

5. Aggregate theme frequency.

The following picture shows an image of the end result of this process. Steps 1 & 2 were completed with coloured tags and poster boards by reading a notebook of printed text. The information across the bottom and on the right side of the picture shows these tools. Steps 3 – 5 were completed with electronic copies of the text and working in excel spreadsheets. This work is shown on the two computer screens.
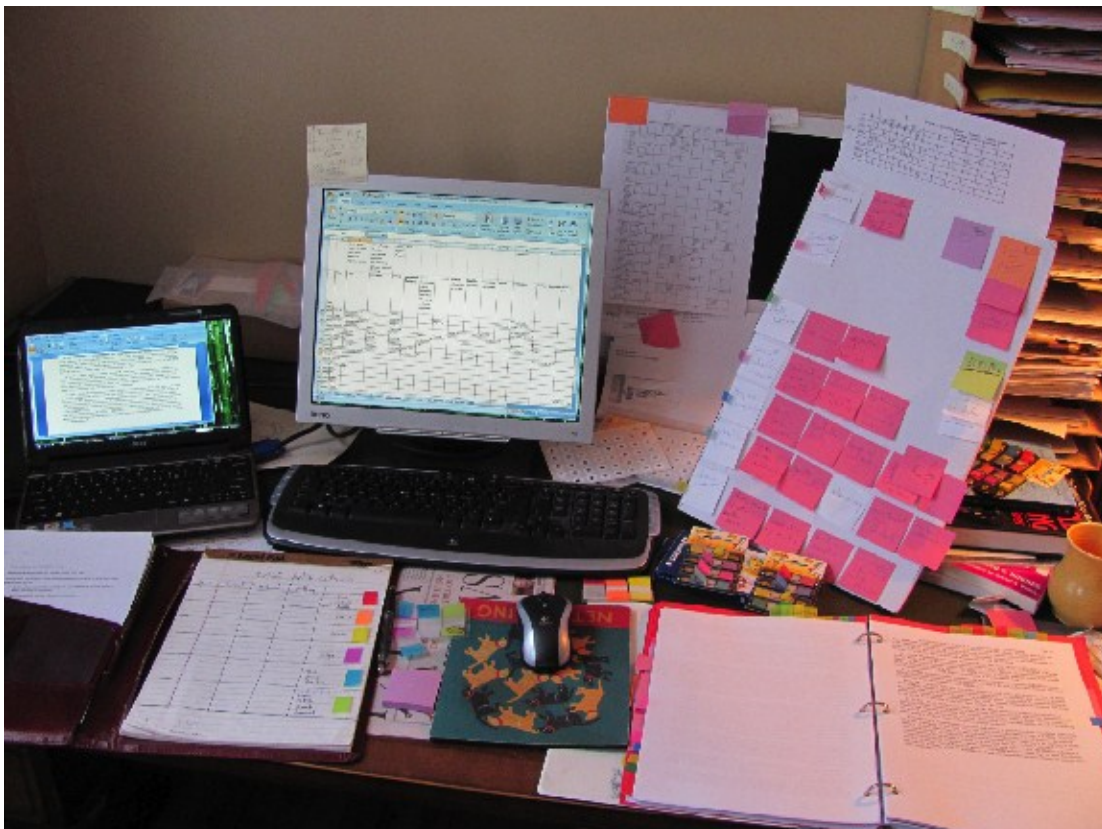
Image 1: Working to Analyze the Media Coverage of Charter Schools

Identifying the types of articles and classifying the treatment of charters.

I began my review by reading the magazine sample. For each article, I determined the type of article and the manner in which the article addressed charter schools. I grouped the articles by: **news-general; news-political; news-educational; editorial; opinion; and letters to the editor**. Where cross-over occurred between news-educational and news-political, I coded the articles news-educational.

I classified the manner in which they treated charter schools using 5 categories: 1) Focus of the article; 2) Partial focus of the article; 3) mention-substantial; 4) mention-insubstantial; and 5) nothing. I define the distinction between these categories below. To demonstrate my coding scheme, I use articles from *Time* to illustrate the differences between categories. I often use the same article repeatedly in order for the reader to develop some familiarity with a few specific articles and see how this classification develops. I conclude this section with the complete coded spreadsheet from the *Time* articles as an example of this work.

For reference purposes, I refer to the articles by publication and article number (e.g., the third article in my *Time* sample would be "T3"). All magazine article references appear in Appendix 1, according to their label as they appear in this text.

> **Focus**: Articles focusing on charter schools. For instance: "Postcard: Minneapolis" (T4), is a detailed article about a charter school in Minnesota whose key feature is a Mandarin immersion curriculum. The article talks in depth about the program and the school.
>
> **Partial focus:** Articles that focused at least a portion of the article (at minimum 1 paragraph) discussing significant aspects of charter schools, charter legislation, charters in relation to educational reform, etc. For instance: "The Apostle of Reform" (T16) is an

interview with secretary of education Arne Duncan. In this interview one of the 4 questions asked is: "Where do you see the charter school movement going?"

Mention substantial: Articles that only briefly mention charters but in this mention say something significant either about charter schools in general or about a particular school. For instance: "Banking the Buffalo Way" (T15) is a news article about a prominent Buffalo business man. In this piece, his "philanthropic endeavors" are discussed, the most prominent of which is his bank's work with Westminster Charter School, where they have "spent almost $12 million on teacher training, curriculum reform, and new facilities" resulting in Westminster now being "ranked among the top 10 elementary and middle schools in the area."

Mention insubstantial: Articles that only briefly mention charter schools and in this mention do not explicitly say anything about them. For instance: "Can Meg Whitman save California?" (T18) contains a reference to charter schools as being one of the topics of a conversation about education between her and Jeb Bush, governor of Florida. "Enlightening the Clothes Minded" (T19) is an article about Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir, a star high school basketball player who competes wearing a hijab. The only mention of charters is embedded in her school's name, "New Leadership Charter School."

I also assessed the articles for whether the view portrayed of charter schools was **positive, negative, or neutral**. As I was coding, I realized the need to further distinguish the "positive" category as being "positive explicit" or "positive implicit." The distinction is described below.

Positive explicit: This characterization is identified by positive descriptors of schools and/or claims of positive tangible and/or positive intangible outcomes. Examples of positive descriptors include describing the teachers as particularly talented or

committed or of the curriculum as rigorous. For example: "high-performing charter schools, like those in the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) network, combine more class time with a rigorous curriculum and exceptionally devoted teachers" (T11). Examples of tangible outcomes included claims of higher test scores (T24), increased graduation rates (T13), and higher college matriculation rates (T21). An example of an intangible positive claim includes the "transformation" of a "struggling" school into a "thriving" one (T27).

Positive Implicit: This characterization identifies articles whose attitude towards charters must be inferred. I did this assessment by assessing the context around charter schools being mentioned. For example, in some cases charters were mentioned as part of a list of positive achievements. Consider for example: "In [President Obama's] first month, the list of achievements is impressive: universal health insurance for children; more pay equity for women; higher fuel-economy standards for autos; the first major investment in inter-urban trains; electronic medical records; hundreds of new charter schools; …" (N10). I also interpreted charters being mentioned as part of someone's biographical background (e.g., board membership or philanthropic support) or as a photo site or the place of a positive news story as positively implicit. For instance: "Enlightening the Clothes Minded" (T19) is coded as positively implicit because, while nothing explicit is said about charters, a charter school is the site of a positive news story.

Collect recurrent ideas, group themes, and name categories.

While conducting this initial categorization of articles, I began to identify emergent ideas. I did this by writing down each new idea that appeared as I was reviewing articles. After compiling a list of these emergent ideas, I clustered them into categories. The initial list of categories was as follows (with explanations of each category appearing after the category label):

Innovative pedagogy: I differentiate "innovative" pedagogy as more substantial pedagogically than simply general statements such as focusing on increasing test scores. For instance: "Postcard: Minneapolis" (T4) is a story about a Mandarin immersion charter school. I classified Mandarin immersion as "innovative pedagogy." In my first reading, I decided to not include "more time" in this category. As I read more, I decided "more time" was actually being described as a pedagogical decision and re-coded this category to include it. This decision reflects the ELT (extra learning time) movement cited in several of the articles (specifically: T24, N16, N17).

Description of charters: This theme denotes any statement that describes charter schools in terms such as who they serve, what they do, how they work, etc. For instance: "Can Arne Duncan (And $5 Billion) Fix America's Schools?" (T10) describes charters as "typically exempt from union rules and other regulations."

Anti-union: This theme identifies instances of anti-union sentiment. These comments are either explicitly or implicitly negative towards teachers unions. For instance: "Can Arne Duncan (And $5 Billion) Fix America's Schools" (T10), notes that unions will oppose the Race to the Top (RTT) legislation that mandates eliminating charter school caps for states to qualify for funding. Given that the article is pro RTT funding, I coded that article as expressing an anti-union sentiment.

Role of education in society: This theme identifies instances where the role of education in society is discussed. For instance: "Postcard Minneapolis" (T4) quotes parents as saying "they wanted their daughter Audrey to progress beyond their own 'lovely but Wonder-bread' upbringing" conveying a sense that they expect more from school than simply academics; "Can Meg Whitman

save California" (T18) focuses on raising test scores as the crucial role of schools.

Tangible outcomes: This theme identifies instances where claims of tangible outcomes are made about charter schools. For instance: "Four-day School Weeks" (T24) asserts that in California KIPP charter schools "100% of … eighth-grade classes outperformed their district averages in both language arts and mathematics on state-administered exams."

Intangible outcomes: This theme identifies examples of intangible outcomes claimed of charter schools. The difference between this category and the tangible outcomes category is its lack of quantifiable measure. For instance: "For the Record" (T27) claims that the St. Hope foundation helped "transform a struggling Sacramento High into a thriving charter school." Unlike "increased test scores," which are coded as tangible outcome claims, I consider "transformation from struggling to thriving" an intangible claim.

Cluster associations: This theme identifies the instances that charters are clustered in a list with other attributes. For instance: "Can Meg Whitman save California?" (T18) clusters expanding charter schools with increased achievement scores of Hispanic students: "Bush explained to her how Florida boosted reading-test scores so dramatically that the lowest-income Hispanic student, on average, now outperforms the average California student. Bush told her about expanding charter schools, grading all schools, literally A through F, and rewarding them monetarily for good performance."

I also began tracking some other factual data about the articles. These data included: the names of actual charter schools discussed (distinguished by whether the charters were simply mentioned or significant aspects of them were discussed), the names of significant people associated with the article (e.g.

President Obama; Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education; Michelle Rhee, Washington, D.C. school chancellor), and specific locations mentioned (e.g., Washington, D.C, Chicago, New York City). These tags later allowed me to easily refer back to specific aspects of articles.

Re-read: tagging for initial themes and identifying additional ones while transferring information to excel spreadsheet.

Once I had identified major themes, I then reread the articles in order to tag explicitly for these themes. At this point, I also began recording the tags in an excel spreadsheet containing the magazine in which the article appeared as well as basic other information such as the date, name, author, page count, etc. The recording of tags was a two-step process.

1) I characterized the type of information. For instance: the previously mentioned text "they wanted their daughter Audrey to progress beyond their own 'lovely but Wonder-bread upbringing'" (T4), I mark in the excel spreadsheet as "more than just academic achievement" in the column for "role of education in society."

2) I transcribed copy of the text into a "comments" field linked with its characterization. Doing this created a spreadsheet that notes and characterizes each occurrence of a tag for each theme for each article, allowing an easy way to quickly access the original text. This spreadsheet facilitated my analysis about how the aggregate sample of articles discusses an individual topic.

During this process, I discovered the need to add additional tags that focused on coding aspects of the article that did not discuss charter schools explicitly but did discuss education or educational reform. This discussion of education and educational reform provided the context within which the discussion of charters occurs. As previously discussed, this context is important information for my analysis. This coding included adding new tags for **innovation/reform/change, the importance of teachers, pay for performance,**

standards, accountability, and competition/choice. I characterized these additional tags as follows:

> **Innovation/reform/change:** This theme identifies articles that mention the need for innovation, change and/or reform in public education. For instance: "Can She Save our Schools?" (T22) is predicated on the idea that our schools need saving and in the text of the article the word "reform" is used 7 times.
>
> **Pay for performance:** This theme identifies instances that explicitly support differential teacher pay based on performance measures. For instance: "How to Raise The Standard In America's Schools" (T15) mentions the need for "merit pay for good teachers."
>
> **Standards:** This theme identifies instances that explicitly promote the need for standards. For instance: "How to Raise The Standard In America's Schools" (T15) asserts that "without national standards for what our students should learn, it will be hard for the U.S. to succeed in the 21st century economy."
>
> **Accountability:** This theme identifies instances that explicitly talk about accountability. For instance: "How to Raise The Standard In America's Schools" (T15) asserts that standards are necessary in order "to hold teachers and schools accountable"; "Can She Save our Schools?" (T22) calls for teacher accountability by a "relentless focus on finding--and rewarding--strong teachers, purging incompetent ones and weakening the tenure system that keeps bad teachers in the classroom."
>
> **Competition/choice:** This theme identifies instances where competition and/or choice are asserted as being a positive component of educational policy. For instance: "The Apostle of Reform" (T16) quotes Arne Duncan saying: "I'm a big fan of choice and competition…. The more options available, the more

we give parents a chance to figure out what the best learning environment is for their child."

Organize themes by categories read again.

This new set of tags caused me to realize that I had developed two distinct categories of tags: tags that explicitly dealt with the issues of charters and tags that were more generally about issues of education and educational reform. This led me to reorganize the emergent themes into two distinct categories, resulting in four categories of coding, as follows:

a) **Types of articles and amount of charter content in the article.**
   i) Article types: News, News political, News educational, Opinion, editorial and letters.
   ii) Charter content: Focus, partial focus, mention substantial, mention insubstantial.
   iii) Attitude: positive explicit, positive implicit, negative, neutral
b) **Content of the article as it pertains to charters:**
   i) General description of charters
   ii) Tangible outcome claims
   iii) Intangible outcome claims
   iv) Cluster associations
c) **Content of article as it pertains to education**
   i) Role of education in society
   ii) Reform/innovation/change
   iii) Anti-union sentiment
   iv) Pay for performance
   v) Pro standards
   vi) Pro accountability
   vii) Pro competition choice
d) **And the final grouping of tags for:**
   i) Charters mentioned
   ii) Specific studies mentioned
   iii) People mentioned
   iv) Places mentioned

This categorization represents my final framework for organizing and coding the data from my magazine sample. I used this system to do a third reading of the articles, double checking earlier tags and continuing to transfer the tagging data to my excel spreadsheet.

Following (included as example) is the coding of the *Time* Magazine articles.

Spreadsheet 1: Time Magazine Coding Data

Number	Title	TYPE (News, News Political,)	COVERAGE (Focus, Partial,)	VALUE (Postive, Negativ)	Innovative Pedagogy (TAGS)	charter descriptions-- both pedagogy and whom	tangible outcomes	intangible outcomes	cluster	Role of education in society	Reform/ innovation/change	Importance of teachers	Ant-Union	Pro-Standards PSE=explicit; PSI=implicit
T1	Meg's	News-	mention	PE				improvi	political					PSE
T2	The King	News	mention-	PI					have a					
T3	Agassi	News	mention-	Neutral										
T4	Postcard:	News-	focus	PI	Manduri	pioneeri	dissemi			more				
T5	Assignm	news	mention-	PI										
T6	Joel	News-	mention	PE			graduati	competi		internat	yes	yes	tightrop	PSE
T7	A chat	News-	mention-	PI		effectiv			photo-					
T8	Notown	News-	nothing											
T9	Assignm	Repeat of T5												
T10	Can Arne	News-	mention	PE		non-				meet	yes	yes	"exemp	yes
T11	Summer	News-	mention	PE	extra	rigirius				internat				
T12	TWO	news	mention-	Negativ						safe				
T13	The TIME	news	mention	PE			graduati		TFA; bio	achieve				
T14	BANKING	news	mention	PE		outside	top 10		biograp					
T15	How to	News-	partial	PE		reform;	improvi			internat	yes			yes
T16	The	news-	partial	PE		autono	choice;			internat		yes		yes
T17	School's	news-	mention	PE	boardin	disciplin	dissemi			respond				
T18	CAN MEG	News-	mention-	PI					success	raise	yes			yes
T19	Enlighte	news-	mention-	PI					multicul					
T20	Second	news-	mention-	PI					preside	internai				
T21	BILL &	news-	mention	PE		autono	college				yes	yes		yes
T22	Can She	news-	mention-	PE						internat	yes	yes	why job	yes
T23	Where	news-	partial	neutral										
T24	Four-Day	news-	mention	PE	more		increase							
T25	America'	news	nothing											
T26	Jenna	news-	mention-	PI					biograp					
T27	For the	news	mention	PE		transfor		thriving	biograp					
T28	Voter's	news-	mention-	neutral	"KIPP									
N1	Teddy's	News-	Focus	PE		"no-	high grad	reform	City Year	educate	yes		unions	PSE
N2	The PDQ	News-	Partial	PI				Evidence			yes	yes	don't	yes
N3	The	News-	mention	PI		serve			site for					

Aggregate Information Collected

Once I completed the excel spreadsheet, I aggregated the data. The aggregation table is shown below in three parts. Each table includes a subtotal for all news articles as well as totals for all articles reviewed.

- The first table shows category A labels—type of article, treatment of charters.

- The second table shows category B labels—characterization of charters.
- The third table shows category C tags—characterizations about education and educational reform.

Summary table 1: Category A Tags.

Newsweek, US News, Time	Ttl.	Type					Value				Icreasedvriw	dtialnsrtodgasedinrt	idlcentulntcdor	FFngenlfptedr-n	IAnrncocolU	Arrdl-ra	IArccocSue
		Focus	artia	MS	MI	N	PE	PI	Neg	eutral							
N-Gen.	9	0	0	5	4	0	4	3	1	1							
N- Pol	14	1	2	5	6	0	3	8	1	2							
N-Educ.	27	2	3	14	8	0	15	8	1	3							
N-all	51	3	5	24	18	1	22	19	3	6							
Editorial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0							
Opinion	5	0	1	4	0	0	5	0	0	0							
Letters	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0							
Sum	58	4	7	28	18	1	27	19	5	6							

Summary table 2: Category B Tags.

Newsweek, US News, Time	Ttl.	Type		Value		Innovative ped ago	descrip tions	tan gible out co	inta ngi ble out co	clus ter	Rolfor	Refpoolrr	Imntpolol-rU	Arrdpl-ra	Frccoc-Su	FAcco
		Focu	rt MM	N PE PI	leutral											
N-Gen.	9					0	3	3	0	7						
N- Pol	14					0	4	4	5	12						
N-Educ.	27					8	16	12	3	6						
N-all	51					8	23	19	8	25						
Editorial	0					0	0	0	0	0						
Opinion	5					0	3	2	2	2						
Letters	2					1	1	2	1	0						
Sum	58					9	27	23	11	27						

Summary table 3: Category C Tags.

Newsweek, US News, Time	Ttl.	Type	Value				Role of education in society	Reform/innovation/change	Importance of teachers	Anti-Union	Pro pay for performance	Pro-Standards	Accountability	Competition/choice
		Focus	MNPP	Neutral										
N-Gen.	10						2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
N- Pol	14						5	4	1	2	2	5	4	1
N-Educ.	27						11	8	9	8	9	10	8	2
N-all	51						18	12	10	11	11	15	12	3
Editorial	0						0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opinion	5						3	1	1	3	1	1	1	0
Letters	2						2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	58						23	13	11	14	12	16	13	3

This aggregation table concludes the coding process of my magazine sample.

Observations about the Coverage of Charter Schools

Aggregate characteristics.

The original sample of 62 articles contained 57 unique articles with references to charter schools (4 were reprints, 1 had no reference). Fifty are news articles (9 general, 14 political, 27 educational), 5 are opinion pieces and 2 are letters to the editor.

In aggregate, I coded the articles as follows (note: where necessary I have further characterized the nature of each category) where the number refers to the number of articles coded for a specific theme (or sub-category within the general theme).

1) Their treatment of charters:
   o 4 focused on charters, 7 partially focused, 28 had substantial mentions, and 18 had insubstantial mentions.
   o 46 were positive (27 explicit, 19 implicit), 6 neutral, and 5 negative.

2) The nature of the content as it pertains to charters was as follows:
   o 26 described some **characteristic of charter schools**.
     These descriptions break down into:

Positive themes:
- -Environment: Disciplined (5); No-excuses (3);
  accountable (3); rigorous (2).
- -Teachers: Devoted (3); Talented (2); Caring (2); Effective
  (1).
- -Superlatives: Successful (3); high performing (2), high
  achieving (2), thriving (1)
- -Misc other: college focused (2); great leadership (2); work
  closely with parents (1)

Neutral themes: (Note: the context in which these themes are discussed suggests that the writers consider the first three and last of these themes to be positive):
- -Oversight: Autonomy (4); Exempt from regulation (2);
  exempt from unions (2).
- -Longer hours (4)
- -Reform (4)
- -Serving underprivileged students (4)
- -Smaller schools (1)
- -Students who want to attend(1)

Negative themes:
- - There were no negative themes mentioned.

- o 23 mentioned **tangible outcomes** of charter schools.
  These descriptions break down into:
  Positive themes:
  - -High achievement, performance and testing (10)
  - -High college matriculation (5) and graduation (4) rates
  - -Top rated school (4)
  - -Dissemination (3)

  Neutral themes:
  There were no neutral outcomes mentioned.

  Negative themes:
  - -Cream committed students (1)
  - -Deplete other resources (1)
  - -Suggest susceptibility to nepotism and/or fraud (2)

- o 9 mentioned **intangible outcomes** of charter schools.
  These descriptions break down into
  Positive themes:
  - -Reform/improve education (3)
  - -Transform a school (2)
  - -Teaching students anything is possible (1)

  Neutral themes (Note: the contexts in which this theme is discussed suggests that the writers consider this a positive outcome):
  - -Creating/promoting choice and competition (2)

  Negative themes:
  - -Destroy public good (1)

- o 8 mentioned **innovative pedagogies** associated with charter schools (all of these were discussed as positive):
  - -More time (6)
  - -Boarding (1)
  - -Language immersion (1)

3) The treatment of other issues in education within the articles was as follows:
   - o 24 talked about **the role of education in society**.
     - -Collective achievement: Internationally competitive (11), Close achievement gap (5), Develop competitive work force (4), math & science scores (6)
     - -Individual achievement: meet standards (2), prepare students to make money (2), prepare students to go to college (2)
     - -Other than achievement: more than academic achievement (1), safe (1), respond to societal needs (2)
   - o 15 explicitly talked about **the need for reform, innovation, or change**.
   - o 11 talked about **the importance of teachers**.
   - o 14 contained **anti-union sentiments**.
   - o 13 advocated for **pay-for-performance for teachers**.
   - o 16 advocated the need for **more or stricter standards**.
   - o 13 advocated for more **accountability**.
   - o 3 talked about the need for **competition or choice**.

Emergent themes: Discussion of observations

My initial reaction to the sample included surprise that there was not more explicit attention paid to charter schools. As we conclude the second decade of charter schools, the number of schools has grown exponentially, (from a little under 1,000 in the year 2000 to over 5,000 in 2010). With the recently passed RTT legislation, I expect this number will continue to rapidly increase. Why then within the major news magazines are there so few articles that explicitly deal with this emerging phenomenon? That initial impression aside, these articles contain a lot of information about charter schools. I discuss this information in the following sections and make observations about the dominant meaning conveyed by the articles.

Attitude towards charters.

The attitude conveyed about charters was overwhelmingly positive. As noted in the aggregate data synopsis above, over 80% (46 of the 57) of the articles were positive while less than 10% were negative (5 of 57). Of these 46 positive articles, 27 contained positive descriptions of charters and/or attributed positive outcomes to charters (and thus were coded as "explicitly positive"). I discuss the specific nature of these positive descriptions and claims in the next section. Of the same 46 articles, 19 were coded as implicitly positive. As previously noted, these implicitly positive characterizations of charters included grouping charters in a positive list of accomplishments, being the site of a positive news story, or charters simply being used as a photo or interview site by a prominent politician. While these "implicitly positive" instances do not give readers any concrete information about charters, they do convey a generally positive attitude about them. Importantly they convey this attitude as if it were unquestionable. The most frequent type of these mentions was the support of charters as a sign of effective governance by a politician. Following are examples of text from selected articles:

- President Obama has had an outstanding start. He has demonstrated the capacity to lead and to manage on the national scale. For example, he is to be commended for his remarkably forthright reform views on education and his determination to connect all Americans on the Web. He speaks forcefully on behalf of introducing more merit pay for good teachers and dispensing with bad ones, and creating more charter schools because of their successes. (USN4)

- In [President Obama's] first month, the list of achievements is impressive: universal health insurance for children; more pay equity for women; higher fuel-economy standards for autos; the first major investment in inter-urban trains; electronic medical records; hundreds of new charter schools; new money for college loans; help to homeowners facing foreclosures, to mention only a few. (N10)

- Because no one ever marches for stimulus or a budget, maybe it's easier to assess Obama's achievements by thinking of the people on the receiving end. If you're a woman seeking pay equity, a child in need of health insurance, a nurse trying to avoid a layoff, a $25,000-a-year worker hoping for a tax credit, a passenger who would rather take the train, a group of parents trying to start a charter school, a homeowner facing foreclosure, a cancer researcher strapped for funding, a hiker looking for more wilderness, a small business tired of exorbitant federal loan fees, a historian trying to see some long-secret documents, a young person eager to take part in national service, a prisoner praying to avoid torture, then you got something tangible out of the president's debut. (N8)

- To that end, [potential California governor Meg Whitman] proposes three ideas: creating jobs by slashing taxes and regulation; improving the education system by grading schools and launching more charter schools; and reducing government spending, primarily by firing thousands of state workers. (T1)

The next most frequent type of implicit positive mention (6 times) was including charter schools as part of someone's biography, either by stating that they had given to or been on boards of charters (T2, T25), had worked at a charter school (T26) and/or had started a charter school (USN11). These types of mentions represent someone (the author of the story) making an explicit choice to include charters with the assumption that their readership would concur with their positive characterization of charters. This same decision-making process was absent in the instances of news stories that implicitly negatively portray charters.

Of the 50 news articles only 3 (6%) were negative. Two of these had insubstantial mentions and one substantial—meaning that not a single one of the news articles that focused or partially focused on charter schools (11 total) was negative. One of the insubstantial mentions was a story featuring a politician being prosecuted for fraud, where the connection to charter schools was that a

fundraising event that he was part of also included raising money for a charter school (N9). The other insubstantial mention was a story about two boys who had committed suicide after being bullied at school. The name of the school where one of them attended was mentioned as "New Leadership Charter School" (T12). As noted earlier, both of these instances differ from the positive inclusions in that the inclusion of charters did not necessarily reflect the writer's view of charters but was simply a fact of the story itself. The only substantial mention (USN2) incorrectly asserted that charter schools charge tuition. In 50 news articles these three are the only negative portrayals of charter schools. The only 2 letters to the editor published were both negative; both were written by career school people— one self-described as a career "educational supervisor" (N15), the other as a "retired public school administrator" (USN3).

Observation #1, attitude towards charters.

This combination of high frequency of positive mentions characterized by the choice to use charters as evidence of positive change and infrequent negative mention (that occurs out of story necessity or in the form of a letter to the editor), reveals that this particular group of stories conveys a strong positive impression of charter schools and the growth of the charter school movement.

Description of charters.

I next examine the content of the explicitly positive claims about charters in order to better understand how charters are characterized in this set of articles. Of the 68 positive attributes of charter schools, 36 were descriptive, 26 claimed positive tangible results, and 6 talked about positive intangible results.

Within the descriptions, the most common attribute identified was the environment, characterized as: disciplined (5), no excuses (3), accountable (3), and rigorous (2). The next most frequent descriptions were general statements about charters and statements about teachers at charters. Charter schools themselves are described as: successful (3), high performing (2), high achieving (2), and thriving (1) and as having teachers that are devoted (3), talented (2), caring (2), and effective (1). Furthermore there is a clear relationship developed between these various components. Consider the following quotes:

- These new high-performing schools, often called "no-excuses schools," demonstrate that effective principals and talented teachers can create a school culture of accountability to dramatically boost minority performance. (USN5)

- The personal touch is paramount. Inner-city students won't thrive unless teachers show they care. KIPP students who don't pay attention or misbehave are often temporarily barred from talking to other students. They must talk to teachers instead. After many conversations about what such behavior is doing to their college chances, they realize these people will not leave them alone until they shape up. (N11)

- Their recipe also calls for talented and impassioned faculty, firm discipline, a powerful school culture, and students who have chosen to be there. (USN6)

- Most Hawthorne teachers, for example, hold after-school tutorials, staying well into the evening to help advanced as well as struggling students. The teachers also have little patience for excuses. Students who miss a class or fail to turn in an assignment serve lunch detention, where they study for college entrance exams. (USN8)

- Elsewhere, high-performing charter schools, like those in the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) network, combine more class time with a rigorous curriculum and exceptionally devoted teachers. (T10)

As demonstrated by these quotes, the characterization of charter schools is dominated by a theme of effectiveness developed through disciplined, rigorous environment lead by effective, devoted teachers.

The description of charter schools is further informed by characteristics that I characterize as **neutral themes**. While these themes are not inherently positive, within the context of the articles, I believe the writers considered these themes as positive attributes of charter schools. The themes included:

- independence from oversight and regulation as characterized by: (autonomy—4 mentions, exempt from regulation—2 mentions, and exempt from union control—2 mentions);
- reform—4 mentions,
- serving underprivileged students—4 mentions,
- being part of separate movements for: additional time in schools— 4 mentions, smaller schools—1 mention,
- serving students who want to attend (1 mention)

Observation #2, description of charters.

As I consider how these attributes contribute to the characterization of charters the earlier description of "effectiveness developed through disciplined, rigorous environment lead by effective, devoted teachers" could be augmented now by the additional description of "serving minority students," "reforming education," "being free from traditional school controls," and "increasing time devoted to academic study." Combining these themes, I describe the emergent description of charters as: *Charter schools effectively serve underprivileged students by being freed from traditional educational oversights to reform schools by creating disciplined, rigorous environments lead by effective devoted teachers, willing to spend extra time if necessary to be successful.*

Outcomes of charters.

The **positive tangible results** category was dominated by two categories: 1) high achievement, performance, and/or testing (10 mentions), and 2) high graduation and/or matriculation rates (9 mentions). Also mentioned in this category was the achievement of the school as being top rated or high ranking (4 mentions). Finally there was mention of dissemination. This last category (dissemination) was not mentioned explicitly or as a positive by authors, but rather as evidence of dissemination of a pedagogical strategy within the article that I then explicitly characterized as dissemination and labeled as positive. I will return to the importance of this distinction later. For the initial purpose of understanding how these articles characterize charters, I want to focus on the first three claims—all of which are explicit positive claims made by authors. Consider the following excerpts:

- At KIPP D.C. Key Academy, fifth graders in the first class scored at the 21st percentile in reading and the 34th percentile in math on national standardized tests when they arrived. By the time they graduated from middle school in eighth grade, the students were at the 71st percentile in reading and the 92nd percentile in math, outperforming the average white student. Three of the four top-performing middle schools for low-income students in Washington on the city's math achievement test are now KIPP schools. (USN5)

- So far, the Lennox teachers' work is paying off. Three quarters of students are accepted to four-year colleges, including students who were not interested in math and science as freshmen but who say that once they leave they will consider college majors in those fields. (USN8)

- The city's public school system, once considered among the country's worst, is undergoing a renaissance as a laboratory for charter schools. With more autonomy and stricter rules of behavior, the charter schools are showing evidence of outperforming their traditional peers. (USN13)

These quotes characterize charters as high-achieving academic institutions with high graduation rates, high college matriculation rates and high ranks within the overall public school systems.

This impression is further reinforced by the themes that emerge as **positive intangible outcomes**, including "reforming/improving education" (3 mentions) and "transforming a school" (2 mentions) as well as "create/promote competition" (2 mentions). This last theme (which I characterize as neutral) is characterized by the authors of the articles as positive.

Observation #3, outcomes of charters.

Charter school success is evidenced by their high levels of academic achievement, high college matriculation rates, and high ranking as compared to traditional public schools.

Innovative pedagogy.

The final category I developed for themes about charters was **innovative pedagogy**, which had 8 mentions. Six of these 8 mentions were "more time" and one each was "language immersion" and "boarding." The only recurrent theme of "more time" further supports the emergent descriptions of charters as rigorous and disciplined. However, "boarding" and "language immersion" as pedagogical strategies are suggestive of something quite different. I deal with these mentions in the next section.

Observations, #4, innovative pedagogy.

The dominant pedagogical innovation of charters is to increase the amount of time devoted to teaching and learning.

Compilation of observations 1-4.

The magazine coverage of charter schools is dominated by positive coverage, specifically portraying charter schools as school reform efforts that create disciplined, rigorous environments lead by effective devoted teachers, willing to spend extra time if necessary to be successful. This reform is facilitated by charters schools being freed from traditional educational oversights and results in high levels of academic achievement, high college matriculation rates, and high ranking as compared to traditional public schools.

Alternate description of charters.

To this point, I have focused on developing a description of the dominant themes of these articles in order to characterize the overall tone/attitude/description towards charters. I now switch strategies and focus on the non-dominant themes and characteristics to see what stories about charters, while infrequent, are still evident in these articles. I start with the two issues of innovative pedagogy and build from there.

The two articles in my sample that address innovative pedagogies other than additional time are: 1) "Postcard: Minneapolis" (T4), a story focusing on a charter school that runs a Mandarin immersion program, and 2) "School's In" (T17), a story focusing on an initiative to start a public boarding school fashioned after the charter school SEED, which has 5 day boarding. In addition to

innovative pedagogy, these articles also both contain themes of dissemination. In the Minneapolis school, their success has lead to receiving an "$800,000 grant from the Department of Education to develop a teaching model for immersion middle schools" (T4). In the second article, the school being developed is being modeled after a charter school. Both of these articles implicitly introduce the idea that charter schools may be a site in which to experiment with and then disseminate alternate models of education. As previously discussed in the historical literature of charter schools and their purpose, both ideas of pedagogical innovation and the associated idea of its dissemination back to the non-charter public system are important foundational ideas for the rationale of the existence of charters.

Another aspect of charters that is covered as a single descriptive mention is contained as the last description in a previously used quote: "Their recipe also calls for talented and impassioned faculty, firm discipline, a powerful school culture, and students who have chosen to be there" (USN6). The significance of "students who have chosen to be there" is clear from the earlier review of the debate about charter school student achievement. While its significance is only hinted at in this quote, its mention is noteworthy.

Aspects of these critiques are also covered in the two negative letters about charters. While these critiques do not appear as written by the staff of papers in the form of news stories but as letters to the editor, and therefore do not reflect what the media believes but how readers are reacting to articles published, it is important in the context of this research to acknowledge that these viewpoints have been published. They both capture important components of the critique against the general positive acclaim that the review of this sample has shown charters schools receive. They are:

- In his commentary, Klein points to charter schools as examples of the fact that educators can and do change historical correlations among race and socioeconomic backgrounds and achievement. No mention is made of the research that indicates that charter school and public school students achieve pretty much alike with like

student bodies. There is also no mention of the abuses of nepotism and fraud to which charter schools are vulnerable, as recent experiences have demonstrated, or the newly recognized need in most states to provide greater public oversight of both processes and outcomes of charters. Education serves a public purpose even greater than the purpose it serves for individuals. Public priorities and public control are essential, particularly when the public provides funding. (USN3)

- Schools like KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) sometimes hurt regular schools because they attract the most-committed students and parents, and force a lack of resources elsewhere. Having spent more than half my career as an educational supervisor, I can attest to the dedication and intelligence of the vast majority of teachers and principals. Blaming them or their unions for the problems of urban education is not only unfair, but counterproductive. (N15)

These two quotes, combined with the singular comment of "students who want to be there" capture some of the charter school critique that I discussed in chapter 5. In particular, the issues of depleting resources, student selection, privatization of a public good and the negative portrayal of the current system in general and teacher unions in particular are all evident here. Additionally, the hope of charters as a place of pedagogical experimentation from which dissemination back into the traditional public system can occur is addressed.

Coverage of Other Issues in Education

As previously noted, I also coded aspects of these magazine articles for themes that are of particular importance to understanding educational reform on a more general level. These themes break down into three distinct categories:

1) The role of education in society;
2) Evidence for the need of its reform;
3) The role of standards and accountability in making this reform effective;
4) Implementing effective reform;
5) The role of teacher unions.

Role of education in society.

Of the 57 stories coded, 24 (over 40%) talked about the role of education in society in general terms. In examining only the news stories that were coded as about education, this percentage increases to almost 60% (16 of 27 news-educational stories). In considering what these stories said about the role of education in society I found that **23 of the 24 stories that discussed the role of education in society talked about education in terms of collective and/or individual achievement**—the only exception was the story about the teen suicide whose mother was quoted as saying schools should be "safe" (T12). Additionally, two stories mentioned "alternate" issues in addition to mentioning achievement (T4, T17). I discuss these three stories in the "Alternative Stories about Other Issues in Education" section below.

First, I focus on the issue of how collective and/or individual achievement is characterized. The articles focused on a number of discrete issues (often mentioning more than one) within these two general categories. In terms of collective achievement there were 11 mentions of needing to be internationally competitive, 6 mentions of needing to increase math and science scores, 5 mentions of closing the achievement gap, and 4 mentions of developing a competitive work force. In terms of individual achievement there were 2 mentions of helping students meet standards, 2 mentions of school as a way to help increase individual's potential earning power and 2 mentions of preparing students to go to college. Three examples of the ways in which these stories talked about collective achievement are as follows:

- If we don't tuck in our shirts and pay attention to educating the workforce of the future, we're going to flunk as a nation. The days when we could write off millions of young people and expect to survive economically are over. (N1)
- CAMS and several other high schools that cracked this year's top 100 are making a strong push to prepare more students for careers in the so-called STEM fields: science, technology, engineering, and math. They are responding to what many educators, business

leaders, and politicians see as a crisis in America: Once a leader in math and science education, the United States now is far behind other countries. Out of 30 industrialized nations, American teens rank 25th in math and 21st in science. The country trails at least 19 countries that produce more scientists and engineers. (USN8)

- When [Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America] took the podium, the teachers-in-training started cheering before she could finish saying her name. Then it was rapt silence as she exhorted them to engage in the battle for educational equity, first as quality teachers, then as leaders of the systemic reform needed to close the appalling achievement gap between the richest and the poorest students. (N14)

Achievement in these quotes is connected to economic issues both at the individual and at the collective level. This connecting of achievement and economics reflects earlier discussed neoliberal ideology. Also important is that the positioning of education as being in crisis and/or America's future as a society being at stake were frequent features of calls for better achievement. Several articles explicitly cite the origin of this crisis as dating back to the 1983 "A Nation at Risk" report that was commissioned by the Reagan administration (N14, N16, T11).

Evidence of need for reform.

I found that **15 articles explicitly articulated the need for educational reform, innovation or change**. All three of the previous quotes are also examples of text that was coded for both achievement and the need for reform. This was true for 10 of the 15 articles coded for reform, innovation or change. Following are two examples of the calls for reform, innovation or change that did not also code for achievement:

- First, all education policy should revolve around kids, not adult interest groups. This sounded simplistic but was in practice profound. Through this lens, every divisive question in education was much clearer. Higher teacher pay? That was good for kids

because it would attract better teachers. Contracts that barred paying effective teachers more than those with seniority? Bad for kids. Obama's second principle was to avoid putting a stick in anyone's eye. "Let's engage, not attack," he said. This two-pronged approach yielded quick results. By the end of 2009, nine states, fearing a loss of money, lifted their caps on charter schools. A new era in school reform was underway. (N2)

- Why shouldn't we reward the most effective teachers and those who teach in the toughest schools? Why shouldn't we raise standards? Why shouldn't we promote greater school choice and competition through charter schools? Why shouldn't we require districts to grade every school and give parents more information about how their child's school stacks up against others? (N7)

While these articles do not explicitly talk about achievement as a goal of education, the idea of schools needing to address achievement underlies the reasoning of these calls for reform as well. These quotes show how the issue of achievement is even more dominant than suggested by my coding and that calls for reform, innovation, and change are strongly co-mingled with issues of achievement—either in the form of an achievement gap between different groups of American students or of the declining overall achievement of American students as compared to foreigners.

The role of standards and accountability.

The issues of **standards (16 mentions) and accountability (13 mentions)** are co-mingled with the issue of education's primary purpose being one of student achievement. The following quotes demonstrate the interconnectedness of these themes.

- Without national standards for what our students should learn, it will be hard for the U.S. to succeed in the 21st century economy. Today's wacky patchwork makes it difficult to assess which methods work best or how to hold teachers and schools accountable. (T15)

- Like a packaged-goods company with a tainted product, the Obama administration has left that name behind and now calls its program the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, LBJ's original title in 1965. But the accountability-and-standards movement Kennedy and Bush launched is essential, and Obama has moved much faster than expected to advance it. (N1)
- Our kids are going to grow up in a world with high-stakes testing at every level, high-stakes challenges in a very aggressive global economy. We've got to acculturate ourselves to the fact that our kids are going to grow up in stressful, challenging environments, and the pressures of the global economy are going to have an impact on them. I don't see people perceiving the immediacy of that challenge. (T6)
- These new high-performing schools, often called "no-excuses schools," demonstrate that effective principals and talented teachers can create a school culture of accountability to dramatically boost minority performance. (USN5)

> ***Summary observations about the role of education in society, evidence for the need of its reform and the role of standards and accountability in making this reform effective.***

The four themes of achievement, accountability, standards and the need for reform come together to form another emergent theme of my reading: *The achievement gap between poor and rich and between US students and international students is evidence that the US education system is in need of reform. These reform efforts should begin with developing standards for achievement and insisting that people who work in education are accountable to those standards. Otherwise our country is at risk of falling economically behind the rest of the world.*

Implementing Effective Reform.

With the need articulated, the next themes that emerge from my analysis have to do with developing a method for increasing standards. Specifically this strategy begins by championing the importance of individual teachers and their role in the education of children and then couples this championing of teachers' importance with restructuring the educational salary structure into a "pay for performance system." In terms of frequency, the primacy of the importance of teachers is explicitly mentioned 14 times while pay for performance is mentioned 13 times. Nine times both were mentioned; 5 times the importance of teachers was mentioned without mention of pay for performance; and 4 times pay for performance was mentioned without the importance of teachers (although of course it would imply it). In total, 22 articles mentioned one, the other, or both—almost 40% of the articles. Following are examples of these comments:

- [Michelle Rhee] had an epiphany of sorts. In the demoralized world of inner-city schools, it is easy to become resigned to poor results--and to blame the environment, not the schools themselves. Broken families, crime, drugs, all conspire against academic achievement. But Rhee discovered that teachers could make the critical difference. "It drives me nuts when people say that two thirds of a kid's academic achievement is based on their environment. That is B.S.," says Rhee. She points to her second graders in Baltimore whose scores rose from worst to best. "Those kids, where they lived didn't change. Their parents didn't change. Their diets didn't change. The violence in the community didn't change. The only thing that changed for those 70 kids was the adults who were in front of them every single day teaching them." (N13)

- The personal touch is paramount. Inner-city students won't thrive unless teachers show they care. KIPP students who don't pay attention or misbehave are often temporarily barred from talking to other students. They must talk to teachers instead. After many

conversations about what such behavior is doing to their college chances, they realize these people will not leave them alone until they shape up. Strong teacher-student relationships drive the KIPP college effort, too. One of Levin's former students, a senior at the private high school Saint Mark's, called him for help when she was arrested for shoplifting, and was astonished to see his stern face at her door the next morning, finding a lawyer, arranging transfer to another school and lecturing her on bad choices. (N11)

- It's to improve the teachers and to have a teaching force that can really take your kids to an entirely different level. That's been the focus of so much that we've done in New York raising salaries, alternative certification, bringing people into the teaching profession from entirely different pathways, differentiating pay. We're still in the early innings. There are a lot of other things that have to go with that, but if you focus on effective teaching, that's the game changer. (T6)

- As President Obama has stated, "The single most important factor in determining [student] achievement is not the color of their skin or where they come from. It's not who their parents are or how much money they have--it's who their teacher is." (USN5)

- He [President Obama] speaks forcefully on behalf of introducing more merit pay for good teachers and dispensing with bad ones, and creating more charter schools because of their successes. (USN4)

- Higher teacher pay? That was good for kids because it would attract better teachers. Contracts that barred paying effective teachers more than those with seniority? Bad for kids. (N2)

The overall impact of this collection of quotes makes the question in "A chat with Bill and Melinda Gates" (T7): "Why shouldn't we reward the most effective teachers and those who teach in the toughest schools?" a rhetorical one

with a clear answer. This leads to the logical conclusion of creating accountability through a focus on paying teachers for the performance of their students.

Observations, implementing effective reform.

Since teachers are the most important variable in the effectiveness of education, effective reform includes tying teacher evaluation and pay to the achievement level of their students on standardized tests.

The role of teacher unions.

The final theme that I coded for in the magazine data had to do with the issue of teacher unions. I found 14 stories that either were explicitly anti-union or positioned unions as being against the kind of reform that was being advocated (and thus implicitly anti-union). Below are examples of excerpts I coded for anti-union sentiments.

- Obama deserves kudos for drawing scattered boos earlier this month for mentioning charter schools when appearing via satellite before the National Education Association…. He [Obama] should offer federal money for salary increases, but make them conditional on differential pay (paying teachers based on performance and willingness to work in underserved schools, which surveys show many teachers favor) and on support for the elimination of tenure. And the next time he addresses them, he should tell the unions they must change their focus from job security and the protection of ineffective teachers to higher pay and true accountability for performance--or face extinction. (N16)

- As states get ready to apply for [RTT] funding, the opposition is still strategizing. "Are the unions going to tell legislators that they're dead ducks if they support this?" says Chester Finn, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and a leading education reformer. "I bet not. But they'll definitely work hard to soften the RTT language and then work to undermine the implementation. (T10)

- This issue cleaves the Democratic Party. On one side are Obama and the reformers, who point out that we now have a good idea of what works: KIPP and other "no excuses" charter models boast 80 percent graduation rates in America's roughest neighborhoods, nearly twice the norm. On the other side are the teachers' unions and their incrementalist enablers in the political class. They talk a good game about education but make up phony excuses for opposing real reform and accountability. (N1)

- Rhee has promised to make Washington the highest-performing urban school district in the nation, a prospect that, if realized, could transform the way schools across the country are run. She is attempting to do this through a relentless focus on finding--and rewarding--strong teachers, purging incompetent ones and weakening the tenure system that keeps bad teachers in the classroom. (T22)

- Beyond dealing with crime, Booker has personally raised $25 million from private donors for Newark's charter schools fund-- much of it from well-known philanthropists like John Walton, the son of Wal-Mart's founder--fighting the teachers union every step of the way. (N18)

Observations, role of teacher unions:

Teacher unions protect ineffective teachers and oppose accountability based educational reform necessary to help more students achieve at higher levels.

Compilation of observations, coverage of other issues in education.

The achievement gap between poor and rich and between US students and international students is evidence that the US education system is in need of reform. These reform efforts should begin with developing standards for achievement and insisting that people who work in education are accountable to those standards. Otherwise our country is at risk of falling economically behind the rest of the world. Since teachers are the most important variable in the

effectiveness of education, effective reform includes tying teacher evaluation and
pay to the achievement level of their students on standardized tests. Teacher
unions protect ineffective teachers and oppose accountability based educational
reform necessary to help more students achieve at higher levels.

Alternate Stories about Other Issues in Education:

Similar to the earlier analysis of the "alternate" story of charters, there are also a few brief mentions of alternate stories embedded within this dominant dialogue about education and educational reform.

The three news stories that talked about education having a role in addition to achievement discussed education as needing to be safe, education as needing to be more than achievement, and education as needing to respond to local societal issues (in this case homelessness):

- In "Two Boys, Two Towns. Two Tragedies: Bullied to Death" (T12), a story about two teen suicides, one mother is quoted as saying: "How could this school have let it reach the point where a child kills himself?".... "Parents are at work thinking their kids are safe, but they are not."

- In "Postcard Minneapolis" (T4), a story about a Mandarin immersion charter school, the parents of one student are quoted as saying: "they wanted their daughter Audrey to progress beyond their own 'lovely but Wonder-bread' upbringing."

- In "School's In" (T17), a story about the development of a public boarding school, the rationale for the need to have boarding is explained as a response to the local issue of homelessness: "Soon after starting his job as superintendent of the Memphis, Tenn., public schools in 2008, Kriner Cash ordered an assessment of his new district's 104,000 students. The findings were grim: nearly a third had been held back at least one academic year. The high school graduation rate had fallen to 67%. One in five dropped out. But what most concerned him was that the number of students

considered 'highly mobile,' meaning they had moved at least once during the school year, had ballooned to 34,000, partly because of the home-foreclosure crisis. At least 1,500 students were homeless--probably more. 'I had a whole array of students who were angry, depressed, not getting the rest they needed,' Cash says. It led him to ponder an unusual proposition: What if the best way to help kids in impoverished urban neighborhoods is to get them out?"

I coded these stories as alternate stories to the dominant theme characterizing education as being primarily about achievement. The idea of education being about more than just individual achievement is also a theme of one of the letters to the editor that negatively portray charter schools.

- Education serves a public purpose even greater than the purpose it serves for individuals. Public priorities and public control are essential, particularly when the public provides funding. (USN3)

The other letter to the editor that negatively portrays charter schools rejects the earlier theme of negatively portraying teacher unions:

- Having spent more than half my career as an educational supervisor, I can attest to the dedication and intelligence of the vast majority of teachers and principals. Blaming them or their unions for the problems of urban education is not only unfair, but counterproductive. (N15)

And finally, In "Time to Put the Candidates to the Test" (N18), the potential downside of focusing solely on achievement measures to evaluate school reform efforts is articulated:

- It punishes struggling schools, turns classes into test-prep factories and has caused some states to lower, not raise, standards.

Similar to the "alternate descriptions about charters," these "alternate stories about other issues in education" stand in stark contrast to the dominant themes.

Chapter 7

New York Times' Coverage of Charter Schools

This chapter reviews the process I used to identify my sample. It then reviews my coding, analysis, observations and response to *The New York Times'* coverage of charter schools.

Overview

After discussing my sample selection, I review my coding procedure which uses a similar two-step process of identifying key topics (and their frequency) and then analyzing these topics. I use my magazine analysis as a starting point. As I did with the magazine analysis, I make summary observations about how *The New York Times* coverage characterizes specific aspects of charter schools as well as education and educational reform.

In the evolutionary process of my research, I have explicitly separated my narrative reactions from my summary observations. These narrative sections appear after my conclusions about coverage. In these narrative sections, I make connections to my emergent appreciation of critical pedagogy and my understanding of the scholarly research on charter schools as detailed in chapter 5. Where appropriate, I have incorporated additional research about charter schools. For clarity, these narratives are differentiated by indentation and a change of fonts.

Data Sample

For newspapers, I originally targeted 5 of the top daily newspapers by distribution. They were: *USA Today* (2), *The New York Times* (3), *The Los Angeles Times* (4), *The Washington Post* (5) and *The Chicago Tribune* (8). I did not select *The Wall Street Journal* (1) because of its business/ financial focus or *The New York Daily News* (6) and *The New York Post* (7) because I wanted to focus on multiple markets and already had selected *The New York Times*. My

LexisNexis search for "charter schools" within the date parameter of 2009 resulted in over 2,000 found articles.

At this point, I needed to either narrow the number of articles from each paper by further refining my search criteria (e.g., only look at articles with "charter schools" in the title) or narrow my sample by looking at only one newspaper. Because my analytic methodology focuses on looking holistically at an entire sample in order to identify the most dominant themes, I decided to look at the entire sample from a single newspaper.

I chose *The New York Times* for two reasons: it had the highest distribution of any of the traditional newspapers; it is independently owned and operated.

The New York Times was founded in 1851 as *The New York Daily Times*. In 1896, the *Times* was bought by Adolph Ochs. It is currently controlled through the Ochs-Sulzerberger family trust who manages it through its controlling interest in The New York Times Company. The New York Times Company owns 18 daily newspapers and over 50 websites. Their stated mission is to "enhance society by creating, collecting, and distributing high quality news, information, and entertainment" (Nytco, 2010) or, as *The New York Times* proclaims on its front page, "All the News That's Fit to Print."

From my LexisNexis search, I had an initial sample of 172 articles from the 2009 calendar year.

Coding of *The New York Times'* Coverage of Charter Schools

   Overview.

The newspaper coding builds from the magazine analysis. I start with the same categories, adding sub-categories that emerge. My initial coding scheme was:

- **a) Types of articles and amount of charter content in the article.**
    - i) Article types: News, News political, News educational, Opinion, editorial and letters. Charter content: Focus, partial focus, mention substantial, mention insubstantial.
    - ii) Attitude: positive explicit, positive implicit, negative, neutral
- **b) Content of the article as it pertains to charters:**

i) General description of charters
      Positives:
            Environment—no excuse, rigorous, accountable
            Teachers—devoted, talented, caring, effective
            General descriptors—high performing, high achievement, thriving
      Neutral:
            Independence from oversight—autonomy, exempt from regulation, exempt from union control
            Places of reform
            Serving underprivileged students
            Small

ii) Tangible outcome claims
      Positives:
            High achievement, performance and/or testing
            High graduation and/or college matriculation rates
            Dissemination
      Negatives:
            Cream committed students
            Deplete resources from public system
            Nepotism and/or fraud

iii) Intangible outcome claims:
      Positives:
            Reform, Improve, transform
            Teach students anything possible
            Choice competition
      Negatives:
            Destroy public good

iv) Cluster associations
      Part of a list of accomplishments
      Part of an autobiography
      Other

c) Content of article as it pertains to education

i) Role of education in society
      Collective achievement: internationally competitive, close achievement gap, increase math and science scores, prepare future workforce
      Individual achievement: students meet standards, increase individual earning power, prepare students go to college

ii) Reform/innovation/change

iii) Anti-union sentiment

iv) Pro Pay for performance

v) Pro standards

vi) Pro accountability

vii) Pro competition choice

viii) Characterize education as currently in crisis

I coded directly into the excel spreadsheet (skipping the step of initially marking text). As I began the coding process, my emergent schema for understanding this data continued to evolve. I *italicize* new themes (as well as share examples of themes, as necessary for clarification) as I document the results of coding.

Categorization of articles.

In addition to the coding designations of News-General, News-Political, News-Educational, Editorial, Opinion, and Letters to the Editor, I added the designations *Not a Relevant Article, News-Political/Educational,* and *Wedding Announcement/Obituary.*

> *Not a relevant article*: Articles were deemed irrelevant for 2 primary reasons: 1) they were not actually an article (e.g., "*In the Times*" previews articles for the day's paper), 2) the article was determined to have no substantive value because the mention of charter schools was too inconsequential to impart any meaning.
>
> *News-Political/Educational:* In the magazine section I had coded these articles as news-educational. Because of the larger sample separating the news educational stories that were explicitly political in nature seemed important.
>
> *Wedding announcement/Obituary:* The increase in sample size allowed me to add this category to my data coding. I was particularly interested in separating this category as it, along with letters to the editor, is not usually written by an employee of the paper but rather by a member of the general public.

I coded my sample as follows:

Not a relevant article:	53
News General:	18
News Political:	16
News Political/Educational:	17
News Educational:	52
Editorials:	5
Opinion:	8

Letters to the editor: 16
Wedding announcement / Obituaries: 19
Total articles Coded: 204*
*The total of 204 articles is greater than the original sample size of
172 because LexisNexis does not generate a separate entry for each
Letter to the Editor on a particular day. Reviewing the sample
revealed 32 additional letters to the editor. Only letters that
specifically mentioned charters are included in the final sample.

The total of 204 articles, less the 53 "not a relevant article" codes, left me
with a total sample of 151 relevant articles from the 2009 calendar year. As
mentioned previously, this sample represents all of the articles from 2009 that
contain the keyword "charter schools" as found from a search of *The New York
Times* using LexisNexis. The full citation for all articles is included in Appendix
2. For discussion here, the citations appear in the text, numbered chronologically
1-172 (letters to the editor are differentiated as .1, .2, .3, etc.). Each citation also
includes a code to denote the type of article (e.g., np=news-political, le = letter to
the editor, etc.).

Treatment of charters.

I did not need to make any changes to the "treatment of charters coding"
used in the magazine sample. The results from the newspaper sample were as
follows:

Focus on charters: 21
Partial focus on charters: 4
Mention substantial about charters: 66
Mention insubstantial about charters: 60

This breakdown shows that 83% (126 0f 151) of the articles coded only
"mentioned" charters. The category with the highest percentage of "focus" was
news educational with 29% (15 of 52).

Attitude toward charters.

In addition to the magazine codes of positive explicit, positive implicit,
negative, and non-judgmental, I added the code of *negative implicit*. I also added
a qualifier of *alternate opinion* as a supplemental code to the primary attitude
attribution. I used these new codes in the following manner:

Negative Implicit: The reasoning behind this code mirrors the reasoning behind the distinction between positive explicit and positive implicit. For example the article "What's a big city without a newspaper" (106, NG) was coded negative-implicit because in documenting the importance of the newspaper it stated a recent example of having broken "a story on a C.E.O. who stole a half-million dollars from his charter school." Because the charter school is not directly critiqued but merely the site of a negative occurrence (after all, a half million dollars could be stolen from a traditional public school) I do not code the story as "negative-explicit." The story "Does a Teacher own the Lesson Plan" (158, LE) is coded as negative explicit because of the direct manner in which charters are critiqued: "Unfortunately, injecting market-based greed into our profession is becoming more common. Charter-school teachers sometimes negotiate salaries individually. In that environment, the incentive is to save your best practice for your own classroom." This article clearly articulates an explicit negative consequence of charter schools.

Alternate Opinion: This code is used in addition to the primary attitude codes to reflect articles that contained a qualifier about the primary attitude expressed. This qualifier occurred in the form of sharing an "alternate opinion" to the primary one expressed in the article. This coding allowed me to capture the nuanced difference between an article that was "non-judgmental" and an article that was positive (or negative) but acknowledged the existence of an alternate opinion. For example I coded the article "Scholarly Investments" (161, ng), an article about the increasing popularity of fund raising for charter start ups, as non-judgmental because in citing the research on charters it states that: "Whether charters do a better job of educating children, even with the extra help from private donors, is much debated. A study released in September by

researchers headed by Caroline M. Hoxby, an economist at
Stanford who is a fellow at the Hoover Institution, concluded that
on average New York City charters outperform local schools. But
another study by a different group of Stanford researchers last
summer suggested that nationally the numbers are muddier." In
contrast, I coded "A different kind of prep school" (131, ne) which
documents the success (higher test scores, high college
matriculation rates, etc.) of students attending a public charter
boarding school yet acknowledges that "critics argue that SEED
and other charter schools skim the cream of inner-city youth,
attracting the families who are motivated to fill out the paperwork
to apply to the school." While the first article states the debate
without explicitly taking sides, the second article—a piece that
focuses on the success of students at the school—portrays charters
in a positive light but acknowledges that another opinion exists.

Coding of attitude towards charters.

I coded the data as follows:

		Alternate Opinion
Positive explicit:	49	10
Positive implicit:	66	6
Negative implicit:	15	
Negative explicit:	4	
Non- judgmental:	17	

D*etailed description of implicit codes:*

Over half of the "implicitly" coded articles (56 of 81) were coded by what
I previously described as "cluster" associations. The balance of the "implicit"
coding reflects substantive statements of charter schools that, while I coded the
substantive description as neutral (see codes of charter descriptions which
follows), the author clearly intended the term to be positive. For example, I coded
the article "Is Oakland Mayor's job forever a second act" (159, np) as positive
implicit. Even though I code the description "that run independent of the district's
troubled central office" in the neutral category of "independence from oversight,
autonomy, exempt from regulation," it is clearly intended by the author as

positive since the central office from which charters are independent is described as "troubled." So while the author does not explicitly make a positive claim of charters (such as high test scores), the author does implicitly imply something positive about charters (their independence from "the district's troubled central office"). This coding mirrors the implicit/explicit distinction I developed coding magazine articles.

Description of charters.

The following summary table summarizes the general codes by article type. Following this table is an in depth description of the coding within each category.

Summary table 4: General Codes by Article Type.

NY Times	Ttl.	Innovative pedagogy	Descriptions	Tangible outcomes	Intangible outcomes	Cluster
Not a relevant article	**53**					
N-Gen.	**18**	**1**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**7**
N- Pol	**16**		**3**	**4**		**9**
N-PE	**17**	**2**	**9**	**3**	**4**	**6**
N-Educ.	**52**	**17**	**36**	**24**	**7**	**8**
N-all	**103**	**20**	**53**	**32**	**12**	**30**
Editorial	5	3	5	3	2	
Opinion	8		6	3	2	2
Ed & Op	**13**	**3**	**11**	**6**	**4**	**2**
Letters	16	4	6	4		
OB/BA	19		4		1	12
All Categories	**151**	**27**	**74**	**42**	**17**	**44**

Notes about the following detailed summaries:

> 1) The italicized sub-categories are additions that emerged in my reading of *The New York Times'* sample.
>
> 2) The totals in parentheses (indented within the larger category) represent totals within the larger subcategory code. The totals of subcategory codes may exceed the total category codes because articles often mention more than one sub-category. This capturing of both total articles in which a code appears as well as the number of times various subcategories appear allows for a richer appreciation of the data and a more nuanced discussion of it.

General Descriptors: 74 articles.

Positives:

Environment—no excuse, rigorous, accountable: 20 articles

    Including the addition of:

Data driven:	3 articles
Results focused:	1 article
Accountability for autonomy:	4 articles.

Teachers—devoted, talented, caring, effective: 4 articles

General descriptors—high performing/achievement/thriving: 40 articles

    Including the addition of:

Replace struggling schools:	13 articles
Increasing demand:	6 articles
Better option:	2 articles
College focused:	3 articles

Places of reform, innovation and/or change: 35 articles

    Some of which specifically note charters importance for ed reform:

Important general:	5 articles
Laboratories for reform:	5 articles
Incubators for good labour relation:	2 articles

Neutral:

Independence from oversight, autonomy, regulation: 36 articles

    Including the more specific descriptors of:

Exempt from union control:	4 articles
Privately managed:	2 articles
Flexibility to fire teachers:	2 articles
Freedom to shape curriculum:	2 articles
Accountability for autonomy:	4 articles
Publicly financed	25 articles

Serving underprivileged students: 19 articles

Students chosen by lottery:	4 articles
Backed by philanthropists:	11 articles

Growing educational segment: 8 articles

Buildings privately financed: 4 articles

Non-religious affiliation:	3 articles
Can fail: 2 articles	

Negatives:

Not the best solution/main problem:	6 articles
Some charters are not as good:	4 articles
Teachers are paid less:	3 articles
Faint praise:	2 articles
Against publicly funding 'private' schools:	2 articles
Too focused on testing:	1 article
Contribute to re-segregation:	1 article
Taking enrollment from Catholics:	1 article
Not community supported:	2 articles
Students forced to travel:	1 article

Innovative pedagogy: 27 articles.

Longer hours/ year:	12 articles
Cultural / Language immersion:	7 articles
General:	3 articles
Boarding:	1 article
Autism focused:	1 article
More $ for teachers:	1 article
Different teacher training model:	1 article

Tangible outcome claims: 42 articles.

Positives:

High achievement, performance and/or testing:	15 articles
High graduation and/or college matriculation rates:	11 articles
Replication:	21 articles

Chains of schools/school operators: 14 articles
Call to scale up/replicate what works: 7 articles

Dissemination:	2 articles
Replace struggling schools:	13 articles
Choice and/or competition:	12 articles

Negatives:

Cream committed students*:*	6 articles
Deplete resources from public system:	4 articles
Nepotism and/or fraud*:*	1 article

Intangible outcome claims: 17 articles.

Positives:

Important space for educational reform:	14 articles
Teach students anything possible*:*	no articles

Negatives:

Destroy public good:	no articles
Competition decreases collaboration	1 article
If they fail, then negative outcomes ensue	2 articles

Cluster associations: 44 articles.

  Positives:

Part of a list of good educational strategies:	16 articles
Part of a list of good programs:	7 articles
Site visit:	10 articles
Part of positive personal profile:	15 articles

  Negatives:

Site where something negative happened:	8 articles

Political support.

In addition, I coded the articles for their positioning of the political support for charters. The majority of these codes reflect the support of an individual for charters, implicitly implying that their party would be supportive as well (unless specifically mentioned otherwise). I found:

Bipartisan support of charters:	2 articles
Republican support of charters:	6 articles
Democratic support of charters:	11 articles
Independents support of charters:	6 articles*

> *These codes reflect independent Mayor Bloomberg's support of charters. He has been a member of the democratic party, the republican party, and is currently independent.

Treatment of other issues in education.

The following table gives a summary table of the general codes by article type. Following this table is an in depth breakdown of the coding within each category.

Summary table 5: Treatment of other Issues in Education

	total	Discuss Role of education in society	Characterize public education as *In Crisis*	Call for: Reform / innovation / change	Note the Importance of teachers	Negatively portray Unions	Pro: Pay for performance	Pro: Standards	Pro: Accountability	Pro: Competition / choice
N-Gen.	**18**	**3**	**1**							
N- Pol	**16**		**2**	**3**			**2**	**1**		**2**
N-PE	**17**	**3**		**7**	**1**		**6**	**9**	**8**	**2**
N-Educ.	**52**	**26**	**19**	**15**	**4**	**16**	**7**	**11**	**10**	**8**
N-all	**103**	**32**	**22**	**25**	**5**	**16**	**15**	**21**	**18**	**12**
Editorial	5	5	4	4	1	3	3	3	3	3
Opinion	8	4	3	5	2	2	5	5	5	3
Ed & Op	**13**	**9**	**7**	**9**	**3**	**5**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**6**
Letters	16	3	2	3	4	0	1	5	3	1
OB/BA	19									
All Categories	**151**	**44**	**31**	**37**	**12**	**21**	**21**	**34**	**29**	**19**

Notes for the following discussion:

1. As earlier, new terms appear in italics.
2. The total number of articles containing any mention of the category appears as the header for that category, all in bold. These mentions are followed by second and third level categories that characterize the specific nature of these mentions. The total of these secondary category mentions may exceed the number of articles because an article may mention multiple subcategories—each then appearing as a unique mention. This process allows me to both account for the number of articles that discuss a particular category as well as identify the frequency of the ways in which these categories are discussed.

3.   Categories that appear as "no mentions" are included because they were a category in the magazine sample and something I explicitly looked for.

The role of education in society: *65 articles.*
   Academic achievement: 45 articles
      Meet standards: 33 articles
      Close achievement gap: 13 articles
      Internationally competitive: 2 articles
   Achievement other than reading, writing, math, science: 4 articles
      General: 1 article
      Technological education: 1 article
      Civic Education: 1 article
      Inquisitiveness, creativity: 1 article
   Promote/protect cultural identity and values: 9 articles
   Parental voice in management control: 7 articles
   Develop competitive work force: 6 articles
   Prepare students to go to college: 6 articles
   Respond to societal needs: 4 articles
   Prepare students to make money: 1 article
   Appropriate access to disabled: 2 articles
   Safety: 1 article

Characterization of public education as being in crisis: *31 articles.*
   General: 22 articles
   Overcrowding: 4 articles
   "Civil rights issue of our generation":   4 articles
   Corrupt and/or wasteful: 2 articles
   Lacking financial resources: 1 article
   Unsafe: 1 article
   Additionally 6 articles characterized catholic education as being in crisis and 2 articles characterized Jewish schools as being in crisis. The inclusion of these articles, because of some overlap, would increase the category total from 31 to 37.

The need for reform, innovation, or change in public education: 37 articles.

Note the importance of teachers: *12 articles.*

Negatively portray unions: *21 articles.*

Explicitly advocate the need for more or stricter standards: *34 articles.*

Linking student performance and teacher compensation: *21 articles.*
   Pay for performance: 15 articles

Certify for performance: 3 articles
Evaluate for performance: 1 article
Different way to compensate: 1 article
Technocratic teacher training: 1 article

Advocate for more accountability: **29 articles.**

Advocate for competition or choice: **19 articles.**
Inter-school competition: 5 articles
Inter- state competition for funding: 6 articles
Parental school choice: 8 articles

Summary Observations of Data and Narrative Responses

In this section, I focus on beginning to make meaning of the data. This analysis identifies the dominant themes these articles use to characterize charter schools, charter school legislation, and school reform. At the end of each section, I highlight a summary of my observations in italics. Following these observations, I respond. For clarity, I indent these responses, and I use an alternate font (arial). In these responses, I take a stance reflective of my understanding of critical pedagogy informed by my review of charter school research. Where appropriate, I introduce additional literature. As I did with the magazine analysis, I also contrast the dominant themes of charters with alternate viewpoints from the articles.

Categorization of articles.

As noted in the data, I found 151 relevant articles for the 2009 calendar year. Of these:

103 were news articles written by *New York Times* reporters,
13 were editorial or opinion pieces written by the editorial board or a staff member,
16 were letters to the editor responding to articles published,
19 were obituary or wedding announcements.

As I further discuss these articles, I will address some of the differences I find between items written as news articles and editorial/opinion pieces as well as articles written by staff members of *The New York Times* (news articles, editorials and opinion pieces) versus letters to the editors and obituary/wedding announcements which are not usually authored by *Times'* employees. As I use

quotes and reference articles, I denote the type of article. When using multiple quotes as examples of how a topic is being discussed, I draw from multiple types of articles, unless they were unavailable.

Coverage of charters.

As noted in my data section, my coding of articles showed that 86% (130 0f 151) of the articles coded only "mentioned" charters. Given that 53 of the articles were not "educational" in nature (news general, news political, and wedding announcements obituaries), the high percentage of "mentions" is not surprising. It should be recognized as simply an artifact of my sample choice. However, it is important to note that there is a considerable amount of information conveyed about charters (as demonstrated in my coding) in these articles that do not explicitly discuss them.

There were 21 articles (14 news-educational, 1 editorial, 1 opinion, and 5 letters) that focused on charter schools. I further coded these articles in order to ascertain the nature of their focus. I found that the articles could be broken down by topic type as follows: Unionizing, 6 articles; Pedagogy/practice, 5 articles; Charter legislation, 4 articles; Opening a school, 4 articles; Research, 3 articles.

Attitude Towards Charters.

As noted in my data section, the summary numbers show that over 75% of the articles were positive (115 of 151) whereas less than 15% (19 of 151) were negative. The remaining 14% were non-judgmental. 14% of the positively coded articles (16 of 115) acknowledged the existence of an alternate opinion. In order to better appreciate the attitude expressed about charters, I consider a number of additional factors. These factors include examining:

1) the breakdown of attitude as dependent on article type (and thus of authorship),

2) whether cluster associations necessarily reflect author views,

3) the relative substantive level of positive versus negative claims,

4) the relative treatment of positive versus negative research and charter effectiveness.

I then make observations about how these factors combine to impact the persuasiveness of the arguments being made about the effectiveness of charters.

Attitude as dependent on article type.

Because of the differences noted earlier about authorship and purpose with regard to article type, I further analyzed these attitude findings by article type with the following results:

Summary table 6: Attitude by Article Type

	Total Articles	Percent Positive (explicit & implicit)	Percent non-judgmental	Percent Negative (explicit & implicit)	Percent alt. Opinion
Not a relevant article	**53**				
N-Gen.	**18**	**72%**	**6%**	**22%**	**6%**
N- Pol	**16**	**94%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0%**
N-PE	**17**	**82%**	**12%**	**6%**	**24%**
N-Educ.	**52**	**71%**	**13%**	**15%**	**17%**
N-all	**103**	**77%**	**11%**	**13%**	**14%**
Editorial	5	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**40%**
Opinion	8	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Ed & Op	**13**	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**15%**
Letters	16	**56%**	**6%**	**38%**	**0%**
OB/BA	19	**74%**	**26%**	**0%**	**0%**
All Categories	**151**	**76%**	**11%**	**13%**	**11%**

As can be seen from the previous table:

- o 100% of the 12 editorials and opinion articles were positive, with 8% offering an alternate opinion;
- o 77% of the news articles were positive, with 11% non-judgmental, 13% negative and 13% offering an alternate opinion;
- o 74% of the wedding announcement/obituary articles were positive, with 26% neutral;

o   45% of the letters were positive with 27% non-judgmental, 27% negative and none offering alternate opinions.

I find the importance of these numbers to be in recognizing that all of the articles written by the editorial board and the opinion pieces the editorial board chose for publication were supportive of charter schools. I find this to be compelling evidence that *The New York Times'* editorial board supports charter schools.

I also find the positive nature (77% positive, only 13% negative) of the news stories' attitude about charters important. I believe this attitude assessment provides compelling evidence that *The New York Times'* coverage of charters is overwhelmingly positive, not only in their editorial and opinion stance, but also in their general news stories treatment of charters.

Cluster association's differing reflectivity of authors' position.

I find that closer analysis of positive and negative cluster associations leads to additional supporting evidence of a strongly held bias by authors in support of charters. Consider the following list describing the "cluster association" data from the sample.

POSITIVES:
Part of a list of good educational strategies:	16 articles
Part of a list of good programs:	7 articles
Site visit:	10 articles
Part of positive personal profile:	15 articles

NEGATIVES:
Site where something negative happened	8 articles

This coding list contains two distinct types of information: those that the writer actively makes decisions about and those that are simply reported on by the writer. Writers choose to include charter schools as part of a positive list in the *good educational strategies*, *good programs*, and *positive personal profile*; whereas, the *site visit* and *site where something negative happened* includes no such judgment—it can be better understood as the reporting of a fact that does not necessarily reflect the writer's opinion. The positive cluster associations of *good educational strategies*, *good programs* and *personal profiles* necessarily reflect an opinion about the authors' attitude about charters whereas the *site visit* and *site of*

where something negative happened may or may not. (However, the site visit does reflect an active decision by the visitor and therefore we might infer something about the visitors' support of charters. In fact, I do use site visits for inference about political support later in my discussion.) I make a different conclusion from these positive cluster associations about authorial attitude towards charters than I do from the negative cluster associations. I thus conclude the positive cluster data to be a more compelling reflection of author attitudes than the negative cluster association. For this reason, I believe the positive cluster association conveys a more compelling positive attitude towards charters than the negative associations convey a negative attitude.

Contrasting substantive level and corresponding persuasiveness of pro vs. con arguments.

In order to assess the relative substantive level of arguments being made for and against charter effectiveness, I examine more closely the negative implicit arguments as well as the alternate opinion arguments. Specifically, I examine the arguments made in these instances relative to the arguments made supporting charters and assess their relative level of substance.

Closer analysis of negative implicit data.

The following list describes the data that came from articles coded as *negative implicit.* This list reflects an analysis of all negative implicit coding (i.e., both cluster associations and neutral terms determined to be intended as negative).

NEGATIVE IMPLICIT:

Site of a negative event/experience:	8 articles
Not the best answer to ed. reform:	3 articles
Folding creates negative outcome:	2 articles
Faint praise:	1 article
Teachers are paid less:	1 article
Fighting against public audits:	1 article
Students forced to travel to school:	1 article

I find these critiques lacking in compelling substance. As discussed previously, the *site of a negative experience* does not reflect an attitude of an author, merely a fact about where something happened. Furthermore since these

events [a food fight (154, ne), a bulling incident (21, ne), fraud (106, ng)] could happen at all types of schools and none of the articles attribute any special significance to their occurring at a charter, these articles do not convey a strong negative attitude about charters.

Many of the other implicit critiques are similarly ambiguous. An example is a letter to the editor (83.4, le) critiquing the plan to open a charter school whose innovation had been described as paying teachers $125,000 a year with the idea that higher salaries will attract the best teachers and the best teachers can make for a great school (81, ne). The letter reads:

> Zeke M. Vanderhoek's philosophy of what makes a great school, as featured in your article, is right on target in terms of valuing talented teachers as crucial components in creating excellent schools. But the concept that top teachers alone are the primary factor leaves out one crucial element of the equation: schools must address the "whole child," on a social, emotional and ethical level, to be truly successful. …Mr. Vanderhoek's Equity Project school would benefit from incorporating into its model the concept of addressing the "whole child" with professional social workers to provide emotional and social support to give all students the skills they need to succeed both academically and in life.

While coded as negative implicit because this charter in promoting "the concept that top teachers alone are the primary factor leaves out…incorporating into its model the concept of the 'whole child,'" this negative coding does not reflect that the author of this critique acknowledges that the charter school's philosophy is "right on target in terms of valuing talented teachers as crucial components in creating excellent schools." This ambiguity is a frequent characteristic of the negative implicit codes but only an occasional characteristic of the positive codes.

This analysis of the negative implicit data highlights the ways in which a close reading of these critiques shows them to be relatively weak arguments against charter schools and charter school legislation.

Analysis of "alternative opinion" data.

The following coding comes from articles that were positive in portrayal of charters but qualified their position by acknowledging the existence of an alternate position.

ALTERNATE OPINIONS:

Existence of bad charters:	4 articles
Creaming students:	2 articles
Achievement gap is more than just a school issue:	2 articles
Against religious/language charters:	2 articles
Taking money from publics:	2 articles
Question validity of testing and focus on testing:	1 article
Not an alternative for rural states:	1 article
Not enough community input:	1 article

Many of these alternate opinions lack meaningful substance. For instance, the *existence of bad charters*, does not actually negate the existence of good ones (in fact it can be understood to implicitly affirm the existence of good ones). Likewise the *achievement gap being more than just a school issue* does not negate the importance of school, it simply recognizes that other things are important as well. Finally, accusing charters of *creaming students* does not challenge the data about whether charters actually produce meaningful results. Instead it actually takes charter claims of positive results as a given and attempts to make an argument to explain these results as not being attributable to their program.

Since these alternate opinions lack substantive critique, they actually serve to reinforce a positive attitude towards charters. They do this in two ways: 1) Offering an alternate opinion serves to position the author as reasonable and having considered both sides, thus making their pro-charter stance seem like one based on consideration of the issues; 2) Offering an alternate opinion to a reader makes the reader feel like she has been able to consider both sides of the argument. Only someone familiar with the literature on charters schools and/or educational reform is likely to recognize that the alternate opinions being offered do not represent the best arguments of the opposition (examples of these arguments were covered in chapter 5).

Positioning and interpretation of conflicting research.

There are two important studies mentioned. The first study suggests that charter schools are not an effective reform initiative in terms of raising student scores; the second finds that they are. The first study was published by the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes, at Stanford University. Following is an excerpt of the first study as it appears in the article entitled "Education chief to warn advocates that inferior charter schools harm the effort" (89, npe).

> The study reveals that a decent fraction of charter schools, 17 percent, provide superior education opportunities for their students, the report says. Nearly half of the charter schools nationwide have results that are no different from the local public school options, and over a third, 37 percent, deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their students would have realized if they had remained in traditional public schools.

The second study was conducted by Caroline Hoxby, also at Stanford University. Its findings are summed up in the article "Study shows better scores for charter school students" (128, ne).

> Students who entered lotteries and won spots in New York City charter schools performed better on state exams than students who entered the same lotteries but did not secure charter school seats.

The titles reveal the way both positive and negative research findings are used as evidence to support eh charter movement. The first study (which had negative research findings about charter school effectiveness) is used in the initial article [as well as in the follow up editorial to this article (96, ed)] as evidence of the effectiveness of high achieving charter schools with the conclusion being that legislation should be tightened to ensure that high performing charters should be replicated and low performers closed. The second article [as well as the follow up op-ed that also mentions the study (145, op/ed)] is used as compelling evidence that the charter school movement is succeeding. Both articles support charter school expansion.

Both articles also offered additional analyses of their respective studies in the broader context of the debate about charters:

- Reports on charter schools often arouse impassioned debates, because charter schools in some cities have drawn millions of dollars in taxpayer money away from traditional public schools, and because many operate with nonunion teachers. The Stanford study was no exception; some charter school advocates asserted that it was slanted to favor traditional public schools. (89, npe)

- Charter schools, which are privately run but publicly financed, have been faring well on standardized tests in recent years. But skeptics have discounted their success by accusing them of "creaming" the best students, saying that the most motivated students and engaged parents are the ones who apply for the spots. The study's methodology addresses that issue by comparing charter school students with students of traditional schools who applied for charter spots but did not get them. (128, ne)

The contrast between the contextualization of these reports is important.

1) In the first instance, the report contextualizes the anti charter position as being against siphoning funds and pro-union, with no recognition that the anti-charter debate could be data driven, with this study as a prime example of charter's relative lack of success to make meaningful change. Furthermore the reporting introduces the idea that this report is agenda driven and should perhaps not be construed as negatively as it is written. This point serves to undermine the impact of the study by questioning the motivation of the researchers.

2) In the second instance, the study is contextualized as meaningful evidence directly counter to one of the few substantive critiques— even though the study does not actually address the full issue of creaming students, but rather only partially addresses this issue. (I discussed this difference earlier in my review of charter literature

and will return to its significance again in my critical discussion of the data.) This positioning of the study as definitively disproving a critique and providing seemingly incontrovertible evidence for the success of charters provides a compelling pro-charter argument. No counter-argument to this study is offered.

A more neutral reporting of these two studies would have discussed how each study directly challenges a core precept of the other's position and how the results of each study was responded to by the opposing viewpoint. Instead, the negative study is marginalized and the positive study trumpeted.

The final mention of these two studies occurs in an article about raising money for charters where the two studies are cited as characterizing the two side of the debate:

> Whether charters do a better job of educating children, even with the extra help from private donors, is much debated. A study released in September by researchers headed by Caroline M. Hoxby, an economist at Stanford who is a fellow at the Hoover Institution, concluded that on average New York City charters outperform local schools. But another study by a different group of Stanford researchers last summer suggested that nationally the numbers are muddier. (161, ne)

In this mention, we see a subtle marginalization of the second study. The second study's conclusions are characterized as merely meaning "nationally the numbers are muddier" when an argument could be made that the study directly conflicts with the Hoxby study—meaning the two lead to incompatible conclusions, not that the second merely muddies the national numbers. This final analysis takes on additional importance when remembering that this article is actually coded as neutral, even though this closer reading suggest it has a positive slant.

These differing characterizations of two important studies about charters, each providing substantive argument for the two competing attitudes towards charter schools and charter legislation, provide an important example of the

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manner and depth with which the coverage portrays a positive attitude about charters.

Observation #1, attitude towards charters.

The attitude towards charters expressed in this set of articles is overwhelmingly positive both in frequency and in level of substance, with many of even the alternate or negative opinions represent weak arguments and/or implicitly recognizing some level of charter school accomplishment.

Narrative response to observation #1.

I find the coverage of charters to be one-sided, characterized by a supportive attitude. This finding stands in stark contrast to Henig's (2008) characterization of *The New York Times* pre 2005 coverage as being predominantly anti-charter. As previously mentioned, this finding may be due to differences in sampling (the inclusion of all articles versus just those citing research—although, as detailed here, the ones I reviewed citing research were also positive) and/or reflect a change in *The New York Times*' ideological position since 2004.

I also find that detailed exploration of the ways in which this attitude is expressed provide compelling evidence that the positive attitude about charters is not happenstance but should be interpreted as reflective of the opinion of *The New York Times'* editorial board and its reporters. I believe the issue of charter schools and charter school legislation is complicated (as detailed in my previous history of charter schools section) and that my own attitude towards charters is cautious. *The New York Times'* coverage does a disservice to this complexity, instead staking out a position that transcends its editorial and opinion pages and is also reflected in its news story coverage of charters.

I also find the paucity of articles that explore issues concerning the pedagogy/practice of charters surprising. As innovation is a central claim of the vision for charter legislation, I

expected that the coverage of charters would spend considerable time discussing innovative classroom practice. I explore this issue in more detail in later sections.

Description of charters.

My coding of the description of charters reveals a number of frequently recurring themes. I organize them as follows:

Positive themes:
1) a generally positive description (40 articles with descriptors such as high performing and/or achieving),
2) generally described as places of innovation, reform and/or change (35 articles), sometimes (14 of these articles) noting that this change is important in the larger context of overhauling education in general,
3) characterized by a disciplined academic environment (21 articles).

Neutral themes:
1) characterized by a general level of increased independence and autonomy (36 articles) which was generally understood to mean from school board oversight except where it was specifically noted to be from: union control (4 articles), flexibility to fire teachers (2 articles) and freedom to shape curriculum (2 articles).
2) publicly financed (25 articles)
3) serve underprivileged students (19 articles).

Negative themes.
There were no frequently recurring negative themes.

Examples of typical descriptions coded for these themes include the following:

- Charter schools, which are publicly financed but have latitude in how they operate, are now a major force in the community, with 24 of them serving 6,000 children. (33, ne)

- Charter groups operate publicly funded schools, but often have great flexibility with curriculum and union contract arrangements. (103, ed)

- Charter schools are publicly financed, but they are managed by groups separate from school districts and are largely free from traditional school work rules. (108, ne)

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- The Equity Project [a charter school] will open with 120 fifth graders chosen this spring in a lottery that gave preference to children from the neighborhood and to low academic performers; most students are from low-income Hispanic families. It will grow to 480 children in Grades 5 to 8, with 28 teachers. (81, ne)

- In the hearing, Mr. Duncan warmly endorsed Teach for America and its founder, Wendy Kopp, as well as the larger movement of social entrepreneurs seeking to improve public education through tactics like founding charter schools and seeking to end teacher tenure. He called himself a "big supporter" of charter schools. (9, npe)

- To my mind, the results also vindicate an emerging model for low-income students. Over the past decade, dozens of charter and independent schools, like Promise Academy, have become no excuses schools…. Basically, the no excuses schools pay meticulous attention to behavior and attitudes. They teach students how to look at the person who is talking, how to shake hands. These schools are academically rigorous and college-focused. (66, op/ed)

- She [a student at a charter school] would also be freed from the reminders that teachers, administrators, counselors and resident assistants rain on her and other students 15-plus hours a day: tuck in your shirt, raise your hand, talk with respect, get to class on time, be nice to your classmates, study for your test, turn the lights out, get some sleep. (131, ne)

Observationn #2, description of charters.

Charters can be understood as publicly financed, independently run, innovative schools that serve underprivileged students in a disciplined academic environment.

Narrative response to observation #2.

The dominant description of charters is only partially correct. While certainly the majority of charters are run by private entities, there are some school districts that do run charters. Furthermore, the independence of charter schools is a complex issue that, from a critical pedagogical perspective, has significant limitations. While charters have significant independence from school boards, even when they are overseen by school boards, they still face significant restrictions to their autonomy that may limit innovation.

One increasing restriction, as documented in chapter 5, is how CMOs and EMOs are increasingly becoming strong bureaucratic forces themselves. Thus the increasing pressure to replicate successful charters, specifically as articulated in *The New York Times'* coverage with the call to support the widespread replication of proven EMOs and CMOs, conflicts with the idea of promoting autonomy and freedom. This issue of how EMOs and CMOs may constrain independence is not addressed in *The New York Times'* coverage of the charter movement. In fact, the *The New York Times'* editorial board makes an explicit point that future charter school growth should mandate "new charter schools are run by groups with a proven record of excellence" (40, e).

A second restriction of independence is the role that NCLB legislation and the call for testing as an accountability measure restricts potential pedagogy innovation. Lake, in his analysis of legislation suggests that, in order to promote innovative classroom pedagogy, charters should be granted exemptions from No Child Left Behind accountability measures (2008, see pp. 122-123). I discuss this issue further in my narrative response to innovative pedagogy.

Charters also do not necessarily serve the most underprivileged kids. Kim Bancroft (2009) contends that charters in

low income areas (who had struggling student bodies and limited financial resources) are more apt "to create a student body that would bring stability and success to a school's endeavors, by processes such as culling out disruptive students, letting parents know that the school did not have special education services, and creating an application process so complex that only involved parents would undergo the process" (p. 275). Zhang and Yang (2008) contend that politics rather than educational need drives charter location decisions.

Other researchers have argued that in New Orleans, where charters have been a dominant component in the Katrina rebuilding efforts, there is emerging evidence to suggest that charters are being used as a way to rebuild a tiered educational system where the charters are designed in ways to exclude the most marginalized populations (for example through the complicated construction of the application process), creating further stratifications in the educational environments rather than fixing them (Dixson, 2009). Researchers familiar with the particular history of charter development in Chicago have leveled similar critiques, asserting in particular that the Chicago charter movement may be used to spur the gentrification of particular neighborhoods (Lipman & Haines, 2007).

Additionally, the clustering of the characteristics disciplined, rigorous, and innovative is troubling because it restricts the scope of charter innovation. As noted previously, the federal government's descriptions of charter schools characterizes their role as one of research and design, with the specific hope of promoting pedagogical experimentation. As reviewed in chapter 5, innovation is one of the universally agreed upon hopes of charters. However, the narrowing of charters to be described as primarily "disciplined"

and "rigorous" serves to undermine this original mandate of charter legislation. I detail this concern more specifically in later sections.

A final issue of this characterization is the description of charters as "publicly financed." In addition to public financing of charters, there is also significant private investment in the form of philanthropy. There is an interesting issue with philanthropy and charters. Charters are publicly financed, but they are not publicly started—meaning often charters have major donors contributing to their start up cost. Because charters are characterized as an important reform space (see next section) this issue bears further discussion. While overall philanthropic contributions to public education are a tiny percentage of funds, philanthropic contributions to reform efforts are significant enough, by design, to impact reform efforts (Hess, 2005, p. 132). What this means is that, while the public is paying the vast majority of the financing bill for the implementation of education, a disproportionate amount of the experimentation of education is being carried out by the private sector. Furthermore, the largest philanthropic sources have a common ideological perspective. Jannelle Scott (2009) characterizes this perspective in the following manner:

> Perhaps it is no accident that the new philanthropists have come to favor school choice, privatization, and charter schools, among other deregulatory educational reforms. They often believe that educational reform could greatly benefit from the strategies and principles that contributed their financial successes in the private sector. As such, they tend to favor market-based hallmarks such as competition, standardization, and high-stakes accountability. They believe not only that charter school reform in particular serves as a lever to improve traditional public schools but also that many

charter schools are already closing the racial achievement gap. (pp. 107-108)

Hess (2005) specifically notes the specific magnitude of this impact on choice-based reform (which is one characteristic of charter schools):

> This phenomenon may be most apparent in the case of choice based school reform. For instance, the Gates and Walton foundations provide over 80% of foundation giving to choice-based reform, suggesting a tremendous role for them in the councils and thinking of the movement." (p. 133)

This issue is significant because it shows how the unexamined statement that charters are publicly financed does not acknowledge the disproportionate role that private donations may have in shaping the mission, vision, and implementation strategies of charters.

Innovative pedagogy.

From a pedagogical standpoint, innovation was described specifically as longer hours/year (12 articles), cultural language immersion (7 articles), and boarding, autism, more money for teachers and employing an alternate teacher training model (1 article each). The most dominant "longer hours/year" coding serves to reinforce the previous descriptor of "disciplined academic environment."

The only other innovative pedagogy with multiple mentions was "cultural/language immersion." These articles discussed using Catholic values to inform charters (13, ne; 37, ne), Hebrew immersion charter schools (4, ne; 7, ne; 30, ne; 126, ne), and two Muslim/Islamic informed charter school (3, ne; 172, ne). Understanding how descriptions of these schools treat pedagogical description of classroom practice versus the more widely encompassing school mission of cultural and religious focus is important. The dominant pedagogical approach of these schools was often characterized by rigor and discipline. For example, the Catholic charter conversion question is framed as, "How to maintain a Catholic school tradition of no-frills academic rigor, religious teaching and character

building—a system that has helped shape America's striving classes since the turn of the last century" (13, ne), and a parent from the International elementary school says "The extra commuting time was worth the return to the old world order: five well behaved sons and one all powerful mother" (3, ne). In contrast, the cultural/religious aspect of these schools was heavily critiqued as being "segregationist" and working against the role of public education to be a melting pot for immigrants (3, ne) or as facing significant legal/philosophical hurdles of separation between church and state (13, ne; 37, ne; 4, ne; 30, ne; 126, ne). The questioning of these language/cultural immersion programs serves to undermine the connection between connecting pedagogy and culture without marginalizing the support of rigor and discipline.

The singly mentioned other pedagogical innovations (boarding, more money for teachers, and alternate teacher training model) also all had significant aspects of discipline, rigor, or achievement embedded in their descriptions. For example, the "rigor" of the 5 day public boarding school day is portrayed as "15-plus hours a day: tuck in your shirt, raise your hand, talk with respect, get to class on time, be nice to your classmates, study for your test, turn the lights out, get some sleep" (131, ne), the "more money for teachers" model includes giving teachers a $25,000 bonus if the students meet certain standardized test thresholds (81, ne), and the "alternate teacher training model" involves awarding tenure based on the achievement scores of students taught (102, npe).

Observation #3, innovative pedagogy.

The dominant themes of innovative pedagogy in charters are: rigorous, disciplined and achievement focused. The potential of charters to experiment with cultural or linguistic specific pedagogies is challenged as either illegal (barriers between church and state since the examples used by in the coverage were religious ones) or against the spirit of public schools role in integrating society (because cultural schools segregate immigrants from the rest of society).

Narrative response to observation #3.

As reviewed in chapter 5, one of the basic premises of charter reform was to create a space for pedagogical innovation.

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The manner in which *The New York Times* covers charters does a disservice to this mandate. While the coverage frequently cites the ideal of pedagogical experimentation through the frequent use of adjectives such as reform, change, and innovation in the descriptions of how charters operate, the reality of what is meant by these words is embodied by the descriptors rigorous, disciplined, focused, etc.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, I find the labeling of these descriptors as "innovative" troubling on two accounts. On the first account, the naming of reform in this manner, by default labels the status quo as not being disciplined, rigorous, focused, accountable, etc. This broad stroke of labeling current education (which simultaneously is being labeled as failing) as being primarily a matter of undisciplined schools not being focused on ensuring students learn a core curriculum dovetails with the Kumashiro's description of common sense understanding of schools (as discussed previously) and is directly challenged by many of the tenets of critical pedagogy I earlier outlined. Additionally, by not acknowledging or focusing on the importance of the diversity of charters and by questioning their legality in the few cases where they are detailed *The New York Times'* coverage marginalizes the exploration of alternative pedagogies by either challenging their legal legitimacy (as was the case in the coverage of religious schools), or excluding them from coverage altogether. An important example of pedagogical diversity observed in the magazine coverage of charters was the language immersion charter. Unfortunately, this type of pedagogical diversity of charter is not positively recognized in *The New York Times'* coverage.

I am further concerned that this fixation on rigorous, disciplined models, combined with the positive coverage of charters (see attitude section above) and the positive outcome claims of

charters (covered in upcoming sections) creates a false binary that conflates rigour, discipline, and teacher centered pedagogy, insisting that this combination is the only formula for raising test scores. As the following case study details, this binary is simply not true:

> The story of Trinity School is one of courage and perseverance despite the challenges of exponential growth, and the demands of accountability. Their story shows us that with investment and ownership by all stakeholders, autonomous teachers, and a firm belief in child-centered pedagogy, a "successful" school can be accomplished without an emphasis on standardized testing. Those of us who are in the field of education who may feel that the challenges and pressures of accountability are too many to implement child-centered inquiry based practices can be encouraged and inspired by this story. (Quinn & Ethridge, 2006, p. 122)

Furthermore, within the context of a critical pedagogical perspective, this movement towards a "rigorous, testing based, educational outcomes based curriculum" is troubling because of its pedagogical implications. As already noted in my review of charter literature, initial research in this area has shown that discipline focused charters tend to have higher levels of didactic, prescriptive teaching models—in conflict with what a critical pedagogical approach would strive towards. Thus the trumpeting of discipline undermines the ability to shift actual classroom practice to incorporate tenets of critical pedagogy and runs counter to the democratic purpose of schooling as envisioned from a critical pedagogical perspective.

This concern is detailed in Brian Lack's (2009) critique of KIPP's pedagogical model. In it he asserts that:

Despite being celebrated as something starkly different from the norm, KIPP schools still have egg-crate classrooms bounded by walls, within which an adult teacher leads a group of younger students in daily lessons about reading, writing, and arithmetic…. KIPP may appear to be a radical approach on the surface because of its extended school day and its categorization as a charter school, but in reality, it is bounded by rather conservative, traditional practices. (p. 134)

KIPP's Pillars to success are inherently undemocratic and smack of an individualistic orientation that ultimately rewards and punishes students to the extent that they themselves are willing and able to work hard to overcome the conditions of poverty. Moreover, the social climate at KIPP schools is imbued by a distinctly capitalistic and militaristic ideology (p. 136)

Put differently, what would middle-class white suburbanites think about their children being placed on the bench during field trips, or having to wear their shirts inside out all day long for not completing homework assignments? This is not to treat the disparate cultures of suburban and urban families monolithically, but simply to underscore the implicit inequity of describing coercion and humiliation as —what works for one group but as outlandishly inappropriate for another. What works may be just another form of institutional racism and systematic stratification. (pp. 140-141)

Tangible outcome claims.

The most frequent positive tangible outcome claims focused on achievement of students characterized by claims of high achievement, performance and testing (15 mentions) and/or high graduation rates (11 articles). For example:

Charter schools, which are privately run but publicly financed, have been faring well on standardized tests in recent years. (128, ne)

KIPP Amp and KIPP Infinity [two charter schools that are part of the KIPP charter network] both earned A's on their report cards and students had high scores on standardized tests. (11, ne)

It is important to point out that nearly 2,500 students have filled the capital city's nine charter schools, nearly all of which are outperforming this "small" upstate district on state tests. (48, le)

The sixth graders, seven of them, said they were bored with the intellectual pace at Middle School 322 in Washington Heights, so their teachers brought them to the Harlem Education Fair on Saturday to hunt for a new school for the fall. "I need to be challenged more," said Shirley Reyes, 11, who was checking out the mix of public charter schools and private schools making their pitches. "These schools give you a better opportunity, they give you better test grades." (33, ne)

Harlem Children's Zone schools produced "enormous" gains. The typical student entered the charter middle school, Promise Academy, in sixth grade and scored in the 39th percentile among New York City students in math. By the eighth grade, the typical student in the school was in the 74th percentile. The typical student entered the school scoring in the 39th percentile in English Language Arts (verbal ability). By eighth grade, the typical student was in the 53rd percentile. (66, op/ed)

These claims portray charters as high achieving academic schools where students' scores on standardized tests consistently improve. This achievement outcome is then paired with the argument for charters as a way to reform public education, specifically through the tangible outcome claims of *replication of successful charters* (21 articles) and/or the *replacement of struggling schools* (13 articles). For example:

The mayor and the chancellor are justified in taking radical steps, especially in schools that have failed for decades on end. Among other things, the city should bring in a select few of the nation's top charter school operators, but only the ones that have demonstrated clear success at the high school level. (103, ed)

It [St. Hope non-profit organization] has been praised for its work at Mr. Johnson's long-suffering alma mater, Sacramento High School, which the group effectively took over as a charter school in 2003. Since then, the school's college acceptance rates and test scores have improved. Mr. Johnson opened a St. HOPE charter school in Harlem last year. (54, np)

The negative tangible outcome claims are less frequent (11 compared to 74) and less substantive in nature. As discussed previously, the negative outcome claim of "creaming committed students" (6 articles) is not a challenge to the data suggesting that charter school students do better, but rather an attempt to discredit charters' claims as being responsible for increased levels of achievement. While creaming students is an important critique of charters' claim of increased achievement, questioning whether or not charters do in fact show an increase in scores is a substantive argument undermined by the insufficient exploration of this critique. Similarly the claim that charters decrease public funds from the system (4 articles) is a weak counter-argument since, a) the charter school system is actually part of the public system, and b) if charters could be proven to be systemically successful, why would people object to funneling some part of public monies to them? This counterpoint is expressed in a letter to the editor:

A March 17 letter from Albany complains about charter schools, even in the wake of President Obama's strong endorsement. It is important to point out that nearly 2,500 students have filled the capital city's nine charter schools, nearly all of which are outperforming this "small" upstate district on state tests. Albany taxpayers are getting more than their money's worth, as charters

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receive 13 percent of the district's coming budget for educating more than 25 percent of its resident students. (48, le)

Observation # 4, tangible outcome claims.

The positive tangible outcome claims serve the dual purpose of specifically articulating what is meant by characterizations of charters as successful—mainly that success can be measured by increased standardized test scores and rising graduation rates—as well as beginning to document the ways in which charters can supplant traditional public schools as part of reforming public education. The negative tangible outcome claims are comparatively weaker and less frequent and do not reflect compelling concerns about charters.

Narrative response to observation #4.

The ways in which charters are characterized as successful is troubling on a number of accounts. First off, the research is currently unclear about whether charters are actually successful when considered at a macro level. Many studies (such as the CREDO study marginalized in *The New York Times'* coverage and the Miron research review discussed in chapter 5) suggest that, while certainly some charters are successful, there is a fairly normal distribution, in aggregate, of charter school success that is statistically quite similar to the distribution of success of traditional public schools. Thus the success of charters should not be characterized as success of all charters but rather the success of charters in about the same proportion that traditional public schools are successful. *The New York Times'* coverage of charter schools fails to adequately acknowledge this critique. Instead it focuses its coverage on what it describes as "successful" charters, which the coverage characterizes as "no-excuse schools" (using KIPP as its prime example), that focus on a traditional disciplined rigorous environments. Even with in this narrowed segment of charters, that is of the KIPP or similar other models, these success claims are

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challenged by disagreements amongst various researchers. I documented these critiques in chapter 5.

One of the reasons this research is challenged is due to issues of creaming (discussed by *The New York Times'* coverage and already addressed within this document). A second reason is student attrition. While there is much evidence that the success of charters due to creaming has been accounted for in the outcome claims of the better research, this accounting does not mean that the issue of creaming is not an important consideration for evaluating the charter school movement. As detailed in chapter 5, Payne and Knowles' (2009) concern that "no-excuse" charters may create sink or swim atmospheres that only help a particular sub-segment of under-achieving student is not recognized by *The New York Times'* coverage. Also unrecognized is the research finding that, at least in some markets (such as New Orleans and Chicago as detailed earlier) charters may be systemically attracting some students while excluding others.

While charters may often claim they do not dismiss students, as explained in the charter history section there is concern that charters may manipulate (either intentionally or not) their student body profiles. This debate is not adequately reflected by *The New York Times'* coverage—thus leaving a reader of *The New York Times* with a distinctly different impression of the charter situation than a reader who would be familiar with the debate in the scholarly literature.

I also find the championing of using test results as the sole measure of school results problematic. From the standpoint of embracing standardized testing and standardized curriculum without any dialog about its potential shortcomings, the coverage serves to marginalize any critique of standards by not even acknowledging its existence. As detailed in chapter 5, research has

found that charters are more apt to have didactic, autocratic teaching styles than traditional public schools. Thus as the ratcheting up of teaching to a test becomes the norm through the pushing of charters that behave in this manner, the ability for teachers to teach in less authoritarian more diverse, more student centered ways, (all characteristics of teaching from a more critical pedagogical manner) decreases. The pedagogical strategies discussed earlier of recognizing the importance of such things as enaction, well-being, and emotion as being centrally important to effective pedagogy are left stranded as foreign concepts that do not have a place within *The New York Times'* construction of charter school education.

Intangible outcome claims.

Compared with other categories, the frequency of intangible outcome claims was quite low, but the theme of "important space for educational reform" (14 articles) is important to mention as it dovetails with the previous tangible outcome theme of charters as a space of reform within public education. The difference between the two categories is that while the previous category was limited to specific examples of how charters are sites of reform (e.g., replace struggling public schools) this theme speaks to the development of the idea that charters are important to reform efforts in general. Consider the following quotes:

> Mr. Gates comes across as a strong education reformer, focusing on supporting charter schools and improving teacher quality. He suggested that when he has nailed down the evidence more firmly, he will wade into the education debates. (14, ne)
>
> In an effort to broaden innovation, the president called for lifting state and city caps on charter schools. (40, ed)
>
> Because most of the nation's 4,600 charter schools operate without unions, they have been freer to innovate, their advocates say, allowing them to lengthen the class day, dismiss underperforming teachers at will, and experiment with merit pay and other changes

that are often banned by work rules governing traditional public schools. (101, ne)

The importance of charters to the general idea of educational reform is further exemplified in the details of the Race to the Top legislation promoted by Barack Obama and his education secretary Arne Duncan. As noted in a number of articles (e.g., 41, op/ed; 132, ed; 156, ne; etc.) states must eliminate the cap on the number of charters in order to qualify for RTT funding—stimulus package funding that "requires states to show that they are fostering innovation" (108, ne).

Observation #5, intangible outcome claims.

The intangible outcome claims of charters serves to broaden the potential importance of charters in reform efforts, suggesting that not only are charters important because they are sites of educational reform, but that they are also important to overall efforts of reform.

Narrative response to observation #5.

This broadening of the importance of charters aligns with the original vision of charters as an important space in the debate about educational reform in the United States. It reinforces my intuition that the discourse around charter schools is important for its potential to impact educational policy and reform at a greater level than simply charter schools as it may serve to influence the public's ideas about effective educational reform. This characterization may be interpreted as evidence for the importance of this dissertation.

Cluster associations.

As already noted, the cluster associations serve an important role in supporting charters through strong positive associations. While some negative associations also appeared, these negative associations were not as powerful as the positive ones. Overall this category reveals a strong level of support for charters in the articles reviewed. For conclusions from this section see previous section on attitude.

Political support.

As demonstrated in the data section, charters are positioned as having bipartisan political support. For example:

> Those reforms, embraced by Republicans and Democrats, encourage charter school innovation, improve teacher quality, support community colleges and simplify finances for college students and war veterans. That's the surest way to improve human capital. (164, op/ed)

> They take great pride in introducing themselves as the "odd couple," leading an unlikely bipartisan alliance of politicians under the banner of school reform. This week brought their latest display of strange bedfellows, as the couple, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein and the Rev. Al Sharpton, co-sponsored a conference of the Education Equality Project, at which the audience included the left-leaning mayor of Los Angeles, Antonio R. Villaraigosa, and Newt Gingrich, the Republican former House speaker.... Since forming the alliance nearly a year ago, Mr. Klein and Mr. Sharpton have raised more than $1 million to promote school improvement across the country....including increasing the number of charter schools, providing performance pay for teachers and expanding the use of data to measure performance at every level of the schools. (50, ne)

Observation #6, political support.

Charters are positioned as having bipartisan support. Bipartisan support reinforces the positive pro-charter arguments—especially considering the current climate where achieving bipartisan support of anything seems just about impossible.

Narrative response to observation #6.

This positioning of bipartisan support resonates with my earlier discussion of Kumashiro's assertion that the discourse about education and education reform has been narrowed to the point the

democrats and republicans no longer have fundamental disagreements about education and the purpose of education. The critical perspective as articulated earlier by such theorists as Kincheloe, Freire and Giroux are uniform in their assertion that meaningful education reform must transcend the current status quo. Unfortunately the labeling of charter supports as bipartisan, while for the most part true, serves to undermine the existence of alternatives.

Compilation of observations, *The New York Times'* coverage of charter schools.

Charter schools are publicly financed, independently run, high achieving, innovative schools that enjoy bipartisan support and have marginal substantive negative critique. Their commitment to academic rigor in a disciplined environment serves as an important model for educational reform. Struggling public schools would do well to emulate this model or cities and states would do well to replace struggling publicly run schools with privately managed charters that have a proven track record of success.

Emergent Themes about General Issues of Education and Education Reform

In this section, I first review the most frequent themes pertaining to broader issues in education within which the discourse about charter schools is embedded. I then detail the three most dominant topics: 1) the role of education in society; 2) the documentation of the need for reform; 3) the manner in which effective reform should be implemented. I complete this section with my narrative reaction to these summaries.

The most dominant emergent themes about education and educational reform were:

> The role of education in society: (65 articles)
> The need for reform, innovation, or change in public education: (37 articles)
> Characterization of public education as being in crisis: (31 articles)
> Advocate for more or stricter standards: (34 articles)

Advocate for increasing accountability: (29 articles)
Linking student performance and teacher compensation: (21 articles)
Advocate for competition or choice: (19 articles)

The role of education in society.

In order to make meaning of these issues, I first discuss the dominant theme of the role of education in society. I then review the characterization of education as being in crisis and therefore in need of reform, innovation or change. Finally, I examine how this need for reform can be answered by the call for standards and accountability, specifically through: 1) the linking of student performance and teacher compensation, 2) competition and choice.

The **dominant theme about the role of education in society** was one of academic achievement (45 articles, 30% of total articles reviewed), characterized most commonly as the need to meet standards (33 articles) or the need to close the achievement gap (13 articles). No other themes were mentioned in as many as 10 articles. The following quotes typify ways in which academic achievement appears as a central purpose of education:

> [Arne Duncan] praised provisions that required schools to break out test scores for all student groups, thus enabling educators to focus on achievement gaps between minority and white students. (7, ne)
>
> "It is amazing how big a difference a great teacher makes versus an ineffective one," Mr. Gates writes in his letter. "Research shows that there is only half as much variation in student achievement between schools as there is among classrooms in the same school. If you want your child to get the best education possible, it is actually more important to get him assigned to a great teacher than to a great school." (14, ne)
>
> Mr. Obama spoke in terms that everyone could understand when he noted that only a third of 13- and 14-year-olds read as well as they should and that this country's curriculum for eighth graders is two full years behind other top-performing nations. (40, ed)

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Charter school authorizers provide stringent review of groups that wish to start charter schools and hold charter schools accountable for the student achievement they have promised to provide. New York State is also blessed with the other factor that differentiates successful schools (charter or otherwise): dedicated and talented principals and teachers who know how to use the autonomy that they are given and who consistently put student achievement first and foremost. (98, le)

Mr. Bloomberg and his schools chancellor, Joel I. Klein, have pointed to improvements in standardized test scores and graduation rates as evidence of success. (104, npe)

While never appearing as the explicit goal of education, the ubiquitous manner in which achievement appears and reappears as the way to measure, evaluate, or talk about whether a school is successful makes student achievement the *de facto* purpose of education. Furthermore, because the idea of student achievement is never interrogated, the illusion is created that school could not be about anything else. I return to this point in later sections.

Observation #7, the role of education in society.

The role of education in society is to ensure students meet standard academic achievement measures.

Narrative response to observation #7.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, I find this unquestioning assumption that academic achievement can be measured fairly (or even accurately) by standardized assessment problematic. I also find the narrowing of education purpose to be solely focused on academic achievement problematic. I detailed the reasons for these concerns in chapter 3.

Documenting the need for reform.

The codes of **education in crisis** and education having **need for reform, innovation or change** overlap in occurrence and are related. These two distinctly coded themes occurred: in the same article 13 times, as education in crisis without

being coded for reform 24 times, and the need for reform without being coded for crisis 18 times for a total of 55 articles mentioning at least one of them. Even though their relationship is not explicitly articulated, the relationship of these ideas and connection is clear. If education is in crisis, then the corollary idea of the need for reform is obvious. Likewise, if education is in need of reform, innovation, or change, there must be a problem. For this reason, in order to appreciate the frequency of these codes, the combined number of 55 mentions (36% of all articles) should be used to understand the frequency of this characterization. The following quotes typify some of these characterizations:

> Arne Duncan, the Chicago schools chief, told the Senate on Tuesday that he would work for "real and meaningful change" in the nation's schools if confirmed as education secretary.... He called education a moral obligation, an economic imperative and "the civil rights issue of our generation." (9, npe)

> If America had closed the international achievement gap between 1983 and 1998 and had raised its performance to the level of such nations as Finland and South Korea, United States G.D.P. in 2008 would have been between $1.3 trillion and $2.3 trillion higher. If we had closed the racial achievement gap and black and Latino student performance had caught up with that of white students by 1998, G.D.P. in 2008 would have been between $310 billion and $525 billion higher. If the gap between low-income students and the rest had been narrowed, G.D.P. in 2008 would have been $400 billion to $670 billion higher. (61, op/ed)

> Anderson [Elementary School] is bucking a disturbing trend in Santa Clara County: on California's 2009 Accountability Progress Report, which measures student performance, scores for Hispanic students in the county -- 715 -- fell further behind those of Hispanic students statewide. The gap this year was 19 points; last year it was 14. Not surprisingly, given the affluence and high education levels in Silicon Valley, its overall scores exceed the

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statewide average. But many Hispanic students -- 37 percent of the school population -- are in danger of being left out of the "knowledge economy." (157, ne)

Observation #8, documenting the need for reform.

Our current education is in need of reform for both moral (certain marginalized populations are ill served by the current system) and economic reasons (the health of our overall economy is dependent on skilled workers).

Narrative response to observation #8.

I agree with moral imperative of needing to restructure education in order to ensure that it better meets the needs of historically marginalized student populations. I disagree with the positioning of the outcome as necessary for the development of skilled workers—from a critical pedagogical perspective, I would contend goals such as informed citizenship are also important. I find the duality of this claim interesting from a strategic standpoint in that at least one (if not both) of these positions is likely to appeal to large numbers of people.

The manner in which effective reform should be implemented.

The coding of **standards, accountability, pay for performance, and competition/choice** occur frequently in the same articles. The following chart shows the overlapping occurrence of these themes. The diagonal line (in bold) represents the total number of codes for each category. The numbers above this diagonal, represent the number of shared mentions. For example, reading down from the top we see that 28 of the 29 articles mentioning accountability appear in an article that talks about the importance of standards. The percentage of this relationship (in this case 97%) is denoted in the corresponding cell below the diagonal.

Summary table 7: The Relationships between Standards, Accountability, Pay for Performance, and Competition/Choice

	Standards	Accountability	Pay for Performance	Competition / Choice
Standards	**34**	28	16	13
Accountability	97%	**29**	16	14
Pay for Performance	76%	76%	**21**	10
Competition / Choice	68%	74%	53%	**19**

The overlapping frequency of these mentions led me to analyze the relationship of these themes in order to build meaning from these articles. From this analysis, I understand that the development of effective standards is what makes accountability possible. Consider the following quote, which explains this relationship:

> Thanks in part to No Child Left Behind, we're a lot better at measuring each student's progress. Today, tests can tell you which students are on track and which aren't. They can tell you which teachers are bringing their students' achievement up by two grades in a single year and which are bringing their students' levels up by only half a grade. They can tell you which education schools produce good teachers and which do not. (41, op/ed)

The same article goes on to explain how "pay for performance" and "competition" can be methods to accomplish this accountability goal:

> He will build on a Bush program that gives states money for merit pay so long as they measure teachers based on real results. He will reward states that expand charter schools, which are drivers of innovation, so long as they use data to figure out which charters are working. (41, op/ed)

In other articles, these relationships are articulated in similar manners:

- Mr. Duncan said he intended to reward school districts, charter schools and nonprofit organizations that had demonstrated success at raising student achievement -- "islands of excellence," he called them. (28, npe)

- He [Joel Klein] dismantled the community district offices he derided as bastions of patronage. He overhauled admissions to gifted classes, high schools and prekindergarten while creating more than 300 new small schools and charter schools for parents to choose from. He recruited and trained a new corps of young principals, largely freeing them from daily supervision but branding their schools A through F in annual report cards. And he transformed New York into a national model for data-driven experiments, including cash incentives for academic progress. (36, ne)

- The changes also will mean student performance will increasingly be a factor in how much teachers get paid and whether they keep their jobs. There is no consensus on exactly how to do this, but there is clear evidence that good teachers produce consistently better student test scores, and that teachers who do not need to be identified and counseled. Cracking the barrier that has been erected between student outcomes and teacher pay would be a huge gain. (40, ed)

- With a coalition that includes several black and Hispanic elected Democratic officials at all levels, the group has embraced many policies once anathema to the Democratic Party -- including increasing the number of charter schools, providing performance pay for teachers and expanding the use of data to measure performance at every level of the schools. (50, ne)

- Several New York City charter schools and some teachers at public schools run by the city's Education Department have been participating in an experimental program at Hunter that places

would-be teachers in classrooms right away and grants certification based, in part, on whether students improve on tests. (102, npe)

- To be eligible for the money [RTT Funding], every state must also show how student performance will be factored into their systems for evaluating teachers. (132, ed)

This series of quotes, showing a similar pattern of connections as the one between standards, accountability, pay for performance, and choice articulated explicitly in the first article, all show how standards are positioned as both allowing for and ensuring accountability by, amongst other measures, utilizing pay for performance and competition. Within the context of education being in crisis and needing reform, the manner in which such reform should happen is clear. The description of the scoring system for Race to the Top funding sums up well this attitude conveyed about education and education reform (as well as the commitment to expanding charter schools):

> A perfect application would earn a state 500 points, with 125 points allotted for articulating a perfectly coherent agenda for change; 70 points for adopting higher standards and higher quality tests; 47 points for developing computerized systems to track student academic progress; 138 points for recruiting quality teachers, evaluating their effectiveness, and using the evaluations in tenure and other key decisions; 50 points for turning around failing schools; 30 points for other miscellaneous categories of change; and 40 points for fostering the growth of charter schools. (156, ne)

This scoring system clearly outlines a pragmatic approach for reform based on using standards to assess student achievement as the critical measure of school performance, with a clear focus of identifying teachers as the most important variable.

Observation #9, the manner in which reform should be implemented.

These characterizations combine to provide the larger context in which the discourse about charter schools is embedded. This larger context characterizes schools and education as being primarily about student academic achievement. The coverage characterizes schools as currently falling short of their mandate and in need of reform, innovation or change. Teachers are explicitly identified as the most important variable in the educational process. As conclusions to these assertions, the change needed is articulated as being a call for accountability in which the person needing to be held accountable are teachers and the manner in which their level of accountability can be measured is the performance of their students on standardized tests.

Narrative *response to observation* #9.

At this point, the articulation of a coherent ideology about education and its purpose is starting to become clear. This system parallels my earlier discussions of traditional intelligence testing and ideals of neoliberalism in a striking manner.

To begin with the opening position of schools as being in crisis harkens all the way back to my review of how Ronald Reagan's "A Nation at Risk" document that Kumashiro articulates as being an important moment in the way the modern debate about education is framed. Furthermore, the discussion is limited to the idea that education is primarily and solely about achievement as measurable on standardized tests. These ideas reflect the view discussed earlier of how scholars within critical pedagogy characterize the dominant understanding of schooling and the purpose of schools. In this way, my observations here support the claims of critical pedagogues that critical dialogue is marginalized or ignored by mainstream media.

What is missing from this discourse is the idea that education may have any sort of civic democratic goal independent of academic achievement. Also missing is the critique that

standardized measures to evaluate educational outcomes might be problematic. Ideas of critical pedagogy, as I articulated them chapter 3 and further discussed in previous narrative response sections, directly challenge both of these assertions.

One assertion that does emerge from this analysis which reflects tenets of critical pedagogy is the recognition of the importance of teachers. Unfortunately, this recognition is restrained by the proposal of a teacher evaluation system highly focused on students' results on standardized tests. This tight restriction on teacher evaluation undermines, from a critical pedagogical perspective, the championing of their importance, by making their primary function technocratic in nature, undermining the complexity of their work.

Moving beyond the macro purpose of schools to engage with an analysis of how these statements position schools at the operational level, the interaction of standards, accountability, pay for performance, and competition and choice embody the instrumental rationality that is a central tenet of Kincheloe's critique of traditional teaching methodology and research that I detailed in chapters 2 and 3. Furthermore, they also embody the discussions of how neoliberalism focuses on individualism, rather than a more democratically sensitive idea of social justice as a collective responsibility.

One interesting component of these articulations of the current state of schooling and how schools should change is its tacit nature. The articulation of the current state, purpose, and best operational methods are stated as if they were unquestionable. The initial ideas that education is in crisis and that the evidence of this crisis is an achievement gap between rich and poor as well as the United States and other countries as measured by standardized tests is put forward as an unquestionable truth. The potential for

critical dialog about whether the measures being used might actually be part of the problem (rather than proof of the problem's existence) is not acknowledged as a possibility. The arguments of instrumental rationality based on accountability, choice and competition intuitively cascade from these assumptions as simple common sense not because they are the only arguments that are possible, but because, without questioning the basis from which these arguments emerge, they seem to be the logical course. I began this dissertation by asserting the importance of challenging basic tacit assumptions including discussing Kumashiro's challenge to change the dialog from what education could do to what education should do and Foucault's discussion about the importance of challenging assumptions on which arguments rest as a way to facilitate change. *The New York Times'* coverage fails to question tacit assumptions. I find this failure particularly problematic in light of *The New York Times'* claim to be about reform, change and innovation.

The Portrayal of Teacher Unions.

 The majority of the union discourse starts in a series of articles which track the attempted unionization of several New York City Charter Schools (11, ne; 20, ne; 25, ne; 45, ne; 59, ne). On the surface these articles do not take an explicitly anti-union stance. They appear to rather neutrally describe the evolution of "tentative and cautious partnerships" potentially forming between charters and unions (59, ne) to overcome what is seen as a natural charter/union incompatibility (11, ne; 20, ne; 25, ne; 59, ne) characterized as "ideological opposition" (59, ne). However, exploring further the nature of this ideological oppositions reveals that unions are positioned as interested in protecting teachers whereas charts are positioned as interested in student achievement. Consider the following:

> Advocates for charter schools -- which are publicly funded but
> independently operated -- expressed concern that unionization

could undermine the schools' effectiveness.... Those who run the schools say the extra hours and increased availability are exactly what are needed to boost student achievement -- KIPP Amp and KIPP Infinity both earned A's on their report cards and students had high scores on standardized tests. But several teachers at the two schools said some KIPP teachers were getting burned out and quitting, hurting the schools and student-teacher relations. (11, ne)

This characterization of the two sides continues in the other articles, for example:

Charter schools, which are publicly financed but operate independently, were founded in opposition to teachers' unions; many of the movement's supporters view union contracts as a fundamental flaw in public education that keeps ineffective teachers on the job. (20, ne)

Furthermore, unions' interest in charters is portrayed as either:

1) **Opportunistic**: With its stellar test scores and connection to a national network, the KIPP AMP charter school in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, presented a ripe opportunity for the city's teachers' union to prove that it, too, could embrace innovation that fuels rapid improvement for students (20, ne) or

2) **Obstructionist**: Some of the most adamant supporters of charter schools say that the teachers' union is simply trying to stymie their [charter schools] growth by increasing the regulations on their operation. (59, ne)

In both instances, the union defense is again characterized as being protective of teachers:

They [teachers trying to unionize] say their main goals in forming a union are to establish clearer expectations for teacher performance and official procedures for how and why teachers are dismissed. (20, ne)

Union leaders, on the other hand, say they are just trying to ensure that teachers are given fair pay and clear guidelines for how and why they could be dismissed. (59, ne)

In the final article in this debate, entitled "Charter schools weigh freedom against the protection of a union," we are introduced to a teacher who has been an active part of this struggle:

So this spring Ms. Nelson, 39, once skeptical about unions, helped lead an effort to unionize the teachers at the school, KIPP AMP, thinking that a contract would provide a clearer idea of expectations and consequences. But now, with the state's labor board scheduled to vote Wednesday on whether to certify a union at the school, Ms. Nelson has changed her mind again, withdrawing her support from a unionization drive that she says is proving to be a distraction and more about power than children. (59, ne)

The choice to interview a teacher who had considered both sides of the issue yet decided to vote against unionization fit perfectly with the manner in which the story had been told. Given the relative positioning of the parties, how else could a reasonable human being choose? This pitting of freedom against protection where the freedom is framed as necessary for student achievement and protection is about insulating teachers from accountability portrays unions in a negative light.

This negative portrayal of unions and their relationship with charters is also characteristic of how unions are portrayed with regard to educational reform: they oppose it and this opposition needs to be overcome in order for reform efforts to move ahead. Several of the articles suggest unions are already conceding ground or losing power, as if the positive efforts of reform were already triumphing over the negative protectionism of unions (129, ne; 132, ne)

- Charter groups operate publicly funded schools, but often have great flexibility with curriculum and union contract arrangements. The first step should be to break the larger schools into smaller

units and rewrite union contracts to allow for greater flexibility and progress. (103, ed)

- But he [Arne Duncan] is also taking the reins at a time of intense debate over education, with officials from President Obama on down calling for changes that have long been anathema for the unions, including more charter schools and using student test scores to judge teacher effectiveness. The union's influence could wane as education officials across the country move to bring their policies in line with the Obama administration's. (129, ne)

- He [Arne Duncan] has also made clear in preliminary guidelines released earlier this year that his system for evaluating the states' reform efforts will be rigorous -- and that financing can be revoked if states renege on their promises. Even the National Education Association, the aggressively hidebound teachers' union, seems to understand that the time for defending the status quo has passed. (132, ne)

- Good schools constitute a far more potent weapon against poverty than welfare, food stamps or housing subsidies. Yet, cowed by teachers' unions, Democrats have too often resisted reform and stood by as generations of disadvantaged children have been cemented into an underclass by third-rate schools. President Obama and his education secretary, Arne Duncan, are trying to change that -- and one test for the Democrats will be whether they embrace administration reforms that teachers' unions are already sniping at. It's difficult to improve failing schools when you can't create alternatives such as charter schools and can't remove inept or abusive teachers. In New York City, for example, unions ordinarily prevent teachers from being dismissed for incompetence -- so the schools must pay failed teachers their full salaries to sit year after year doing nothing in centers called "rubber rooms." (140, op/ed)

- When Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan came to office, they created a $4.3 billion Race to the Top fund. The idea was to use money to leverage change. The administration would put a pile of federal money on the table and award it to a few states that most aggressively embraced reform. Their ideas were good, and their speeches were beautiful. But that was never the problem. The real challenge was going to be standing up to the teachers' unions and the other groups that have undermined nearly every other reform effort. (145, op/ed)

- In Newark, the governor-elect sought to show that he would make urban education a priority, traveling to a charter school and pressing his argument that children in the poorest cities were being held back by teachers' unions blocking school vouchers and merit pay. (152, npe)

While there are a two articles that present a more neutral and balanced viewpoint towards unions (101, ne; 117, ne), the tone and content of the negative articles overwhelms the potential offsetting impact of these two neutral ones which do not effectively elaborate a compelling substantive argument about the benefit of unions. This argument only appears in two letters to the editor. I discuss these letters in the substantive alternate viewpoint section.

Observation #10, the portrayal of teacher unions:

The New York Times' coverage of charter schools portrays teacher unions negatively, specifically positioning them as being most interested in protecting themselves to the point of being obstructionist of policies that might benefit students.

Narrative response to observation #10.

This demonization of teacher unions reflects pro free market, anti-union characteristics of neoliberalism discussed in chapter 2.

Compilation of observations 7-10, *The New York Times*' coverage of general issues of education and educational reform.

The educational context in which charters are positioned characterizes schools as currently falling short of their mandate and in need of reform, innovation or change. Teachers are explicitly identified as the most important variable in the educational process. The change needed is articulated as being a call for accountability in which the person needing to be held accountable are teachers and the manner in which their level of accountability can be measured is the performance of their students on standardized tests. Teacher unions are portrayed negatively, specifically positioning them as being most interested in protecting themselves to the point of being obstructionist of policies that might benefit students.

Coverage of Substantive Alternate Viewpoint

While I have pointed out that much of the negative attitude and viewpoints towards charters does not contain substantive arguments and compelling critiques, some of it does. The following section will discuss the most substantive critiques of charters and of the dominant characteristics of education and educational reform. I organize this section by topic, starting with critiques of charters and working to broader issues of educational reform. Each issue is accompanied by a narrative reaction.

Critiques of charters.

The issue of "creaming."

As noted in my review of literature on charters, accusations of student creaming is one of the most common substantive critiques. To review: it has two significant aspects. The first is the challenge that the high level of student achievement in charters results because the students attracted are more capable, better equipped students from families more committed to education. I consider this characteristic of creaming the less sophisticated one and have dealt with mentions reflecting this critique in the previous section. A second understanding of the creaming issue is that taking high-level students depletes the remaining

school population of these students and their parents. This issue is mentioned in two of the articles I reviewed:

- With the rise of charter schools has come diminished enrollment and reputation at some of Harlem's traditional public schools. Critics say charter schools unfairly deprive neighborhood schools of some of the best students. (33, ne)

- Many charter schools across the country face resistance from public school districts that have watched the rise of charter schools with caution, worried that they might draw away dollars and talented students from other local schools. (45, ne)

Narrative response to the issue of "creaming."

This critique is an important area of critical scholarship on the potential impact of charters. This research seeks to raise questions not about how charter schools perform themselves, but of how charters impact traditional public schools. As detailed in the chapter 5, while one initial rationale for charters was that the competition of charters would force traditional public schools to become better, for fear of losing students or embarrassment of close by new schools performing at higher levels, there is not yet compelling evidence to support this idea. The idea that charters would make the remaining public schools better through this competition effect was a central idea of initial charter legislation.

Siphoning funds.

A second and related issue of charters is whether they are siphoning significant funds away from the public system. This issue is also raised in the following letter to the editor.

President Obama wants more charter schools. This is devastating for small school districts, for which charters are an unfunded mandate. The public schools in Albany, with 9,000 students, have been hit hard by nine charter schools. The Albany public schools have paid more than $100 million to charters, a gigantic loss for a

small district. The result is a lack of resources for the majority of Albany's kids who still attend the public schools. We don't need more charters in Albany; we need a moratorium. (43.3, le)

Narrative response to siphoning funds.

While this critique is substantive in nature, it is a weak argument against charters. I characterize this critique of charters as weak since charters do not disproportionately remove funds from the public system. As noted earlier, I find the inclusion of weak critiques significant in that, while they appear to balance coverage, they do not offer strong counter-arguments.

Charters treatment of teachers.

An aspect of this critique is captured in the characterization that "charter schools take advantage of young rookies, whose boundless energy fuels them for a couple of years of long hours at low pay but quickly turns into bitter burnout" (59, ne).

Narrative response to charters treatment of teachers.

One critique of charters is that they have an unsustainable employment model. This model leads to unusually high teacher turnover and eventually would prevent the kind of scale up of charters that the *New York Time's* articles reviewed here advocate. *The New York Times'* coverage would better reflect a critical viewpoint if this potential outcome had been discussed in more detail and given more prominence.

Interrogating governance.

Governance is not an issue for which I explicitly coded articles—although certainly the idea of surrounding the autonomy of charters does touch on this issue. The dominant theme of charter descriptions *vis-à-vis* governance can thus be understood at one level to mean freedom from governance—or autonomy. However, there are a number of articles that take up this issue of governance and autonomy with respect to the ways in which New York City and/or the federal

government is taking away governance rights at more local levels, but doing so in the name of autonomy.

Specifically, there is a series of articles that deals with the issue of mayor Bloomberg's takeover of school control, pitting the pragmatic needs of reform against the rights of parents to have say in school policy (45, 73, 84, 93, 104). The following quote from the article entitled "Plan by Silver Would Extend Mayor's Control of Schools" captures this tension:

> A chief difficulty for lawmakers has been striking a balance between keeping mayoral control and giving parents and communities a voice in local education decisions, like replacing traditional public schools with charter schools. Under the plan, the mayor would be required to appoint at least two parents to the eight seats he is entitled to fill on the panel, and the schools chancellor would no longer serve as chairman of the panel and set its agenda. Mr. Silver said in an interview that his proposals were intended to increase parental input by giving more power to local councils and community superintendents. (84, npe)

The following quote adds the nuance of questioning what professionals decide educational policy and introducing the issue of transparency.

> "With its top-down approach, the Bloomberg administration has sought to avoid public debate and scrutiny, while fundamental decisions regarding education policy have been made by central administrators with very little education background," Mr. Thompson said. "I hope that the governance structure established by this new legislation will ensure that there is transparency, accountability and meaningful parental participation in decision-making." (104, npe)

This power struggle is also evident in some of the articles detailing the Race to the Top funding where the question is asked whether the federal government is overstepping its bounds by dictating the state policy necessary to receive funds. The following excerpt reflects this point:

Holding out billions of dollars as a potential windfall, the Obama administration is persuading state after state to rewrite education laws to open the door to more charter schools and expand the use of student test scores for judging teachers…. That aggressive use of economic stimulus money by Education Secretary Arne Duncan is provoking heated debates over the uses of standardized testing and the proper federal role in education, issues that flared frequently during President George W. Bush's enforcement of his signature education law, called No Child Left Behind...

"The proposed regulations are overly burdensome," Robert P. Grimesey, superintendent of the Orange County Public Schools in Virginia, said in written comments. "They give the impression that stimulus funds provide the federal government with unbridled capacity to impose bureaucratic demands."...

"The Department of Education should respect the requirements of federalism and look to states to offer their best ideas rather than mandating policies that the current administration likes," Dr. Ravitch said in comments filed with the department. (108, ne)

In this instance, *The New York Times'* coverage of charters interrogates governance in a critical manner.

Narrative response to interrogating governance.

I find this close interrogation of governance and how governance at a higher level (federal over state, state over local community) may take away the rights and liberties of people at a lower level an instance where *The New York Times'* coverage of charter schools reflects a critical pedagogical perspective. As noted in chapter 3, critical scholars are always concerned with how power may operate to undermine the rights and freedoms of individuals.

Critiques of dominant themes about educational reform.

In regards to educational reform at a more general level, the *The New York Times'* articles address the following issues: ignorance of root problems,

appreciating the shortcoming of standards, articulating the shortcoming of competition, problematizing teacher accountability and pay for performance, and naming the benefits of teacher unions. I save my narrative reaction to these issues until after the documentation of each one.

Ignorance of root problems.

While my discussion of critical pedagogy focused primarily on issues of classroom practice, I did touch on the roots of critical pedagogy emerging from critical social theory. These roots lead to critiques of educational reform efforts as focusing on the wrong problem. Asking education to solve issues of systemic poverty and injustice is foolhardy—issues of systemic poverty and social injustice must be addressed before all children will be in a position to do well in school. The following letters to the editor detail various aspects of these arguments:

- Your editorial backs Education Secretary Arne Duncan's call for bold policies. But the boldest proposal is expanding access to charter schools -- even though your editorial says that only about one in six charter schools in a recent study outperformed public schools. Students in poorly performing schools not only have the greatest academic difficulties, but they often are from families plagued by a myriad of social problems. Reform must address the root causes of poor performance. One reason it has been so difficult to change the education climate is that the schools perform exactly as designed. They prepare young people to fail or succeed in a highly stratified society that has great disparities of wealth. Schools teach students not to question social inequality, but to believe that they rise or fall based on their own merits and hard work. As long as responsible leaders remain committed to this myth, I expect very little improvement in our most troubled schools. (97.6, le)

- Nicholas D. Kristof reads America's problems backward in declaring, "We can't fight poverty without reforming education." The fact is, we can't reform education without fighting poverty.

Disabled schools are just one product of governments at all levels that fail to provide impoverished families and communities with the resources to raise and educate children successfully. How about turning schools in poor neighborhoods into year-round community centers, with health and dental services, nutritious meals, up-to-date libraries and computer labs, after-hours tutoring and recreation for children, and job training, counseling, recreation and educational classes for adults? Remaking schools into community centers would be far less difficult than fighting the unions and firing incompetent teachers, as Mr. Kristof suggests, and far more effective than allowing more charter schools and establishing a system of teacher merit pay, as Education Secretary Arne Duncan intends to do. (142.5, le)

- It has always been easy and fashionable to blame the teachers for most of our schools' problems, but too often the blaming is done to hide the real problem. Our schools lack money: classes are too large, facilities are out of date, and teachers and classrooms lack the latest resources. Elites in New York and in most other major cities do not send their children to the public schools. They send them to private schools where classes are smaller, facilities modern and resources available and up to date. At the city's private schools, tuition is often over $30,000, while per-pupil expenditure in the public schools is about half that amount. If we are willing to spend only half as much to educate the poor as we are to educate the rich, we should hardly be shocked if the result is half as good. The old adage "you get what you pay for" could not be more to the point. (142.6, le)

Appreciating the shortcoming of standards.

Standards and standardized testing are problematic constructs in understanding how to evaluate education and educational reform. The following letters to the editors detail some of the issues:

- When President Obama was elected, many parents and educators had hoped to see a lessening of the reliance on standardized testing to assess student progress and address the issue of equity. For many years, there has been a terrible distortion of education's promise, as everything besides reading, writing and math has increasingly been cut. The arts, imaginative endeavors, recess, inquiry, curriculum that integrates various domains: these are not luxuries but are integral to student identification with learning. In addition, the use of test data for purposes of evaluating and compensating teachers will work against the education of the most vulnerable children. It is a mistake to conceptualize education as a "Race to the Top" (as federal grants to schools are titled) -- for children or schools. The Obama administration should reject the basic tenet of No Child Left Behind: children are not numbers. (112.1, le)

- President Obama has the right idea when he says he wants to get rid of ineffective teachers and reward the good ones. But his Race to the Top proposal, which includes using standardized test results to judge teacher performance, will do nothing to meet that goal. I left my job as a public school teacher shortly after the No Child Left Behind law was passed. My job went from teaching children to teaching test preparation in very little time. Many of our nation's teachers have left their profession because the focus on testing leaves little room for passion, creativity or intellect. The No Child Left Behind law identifies successful schools as those that show improved test scores on a test with little redeeming value. Now, the Race to the Top proposal seems to identify "good" teachers as those who successfully teach to the test. (112.5, le)

- It is becoming universally accepted that the best (only) way to fix our schools is by using student scores on standardized tests to rate both students and their teachers. Tragically, President Obama's

focus on accountability through testing is doomed to fail. Standardized tests are, by their nature, predictable. Most administrators and teachers, fearing failure and loss of position and/or bonuses, de-emphasize or delete those parts of the curriculum least likely to be tested. The students sense this and neglect serious studying because they know that they will be prepped for the big exams. Perversely, all of this (plus the constant pressure of grades) leads to a decrease in students' abilities to understand, retain, apply, revere and enjoy what they are asked to learn. High test scores do not guarantee student learning. The evaluation of a student's progress and a teacher's abilities requires an act of human judgment (much like evaluating a work of art). Our obsession with testing reveals our misunderstanding of the true nature of education. (112.6, le)

Articulating the shortcomings of competition.

Competition is another aspect of educational reform that is left unexamined in the larger portrait of educational reform. While competition is heralded, the downside of competition is not recognized or interrogated. The following letter to the editor articulates some of the problems with competition.

Teaching in public school is not a market based endeavor. Excellent lessons should be shared for the common good of the student, not the private gain of the teacher. Unfortunately, injecting market-based greed into our profession is becoming more common. Charter-school teachers sometimes negotiate salaries individually. In that environment, the incentive is to save your best practice for your own classroom. Districts compete with these charter schools for limited resources, and now even entire states are competing for limited Race to the Top stimulus dollars. I'm not sure how our lawmakers turned the data-based accountability movement into a movement for market-based competition to improve our schools. Based on data available from our crumbling

economy, market-based competition and greed have not improved accountability on Wall Street. There is no reason to believe that greed will serve our children any better. (158.6, le)

Problematizing teacher accountability and pay for performance.

The following letter specifically articulates problems with paying teachers based on the performance scores of their students.

President Obama's financing of initiatives for performance pay for teachers will accelerate the race to the bottom. Studies show that performance pay in other areas has damaging effects. Doctors receiving performance pay stopped treating the riskiest and sickest patients. Performance pay in sports has been accompanied by athletes' use of banned drugs. And performance pay in the finance industry has transformed us into the Enron nation. In education, research on performance pay shows no substantive gains in student achievement, and all Mr. Obama's policy will do is reinforce the ill-conceived notion that low-level standardized tests are a valid measure of student achievement. Instead, pay teachers a salary that signals teaching as a profession. (43.2, le)

Naming the benefits of teacher unions.

The following excerpts respond to the demonization of teachers unions with powerful pro-union counter arguments.

- So, I hope it doesn't seem churlish to complain about one word. You say charter schools "are generally nonunion, freeing them from labor restrictions." "Restrictions" is a negative-sounding word. My dictionary defines it as "something that limits or confines." But as a teacher and proud union member for nearly 30 years, I found that my experience was just the opposite. Knowing that I worked under a union contract -- that there were rules -- gave me a sense of freedom and security. I was able to try new ideas and procedures, knowing that I wouldn't be arbitrarily punished if the

innovations weren't always successful -- the opposite of feeling restricted. (163.3, le)

- Too much blame for the problems with our education system is placed on teachers' unions. If the point is to attract the most talented and motivated teachers, there is a simple solution: Pay them!   If teaching were seen as a road to financial security, competition for positions would intensify, and schools would have greater choice and bargaining power over applicants. Further reducing the job security of teachers -- many of whom have graduate degrees and are already shamefully underpaid -- will do nothing but make teaching seem even less appealing. Law firms, hedge funds, hospitals and every other institution that hires professionals understand that compensation affects the caliber of their employees. Why should education be any different? (142.2, le)

Narrative reaction to substantive alternate viewpoint: educational reform.

These issues (ignorance of root problems, appreciating the shortcoming of standards, articulating the shortcoming of competition, problematizing teacher accountability and pay for performance, and naming the benefits of teacher unions) all reflect important considerations I discussed earlier of critical pedagogical scholarship about education and education reform. Identifying these arguments within *The New York Times'* coverage of charter schools is an important counter-balance to the dominant arguments I previously identified. While seeming to balance the coverage of charter schools and charter reform, I want to interrogate two important observations about the manner in which these arguments appear. They have to do with authorship and frequency.
Authorship of dissenting opinions.

Of the 14 articles quoted that had substantive critiques or alternate viewpoints to charters, and/or the dominant themes of education and education reform, only 3 were news articles. The other 11 were letters to the editor. The critiques within the three news articles simply acknowledged a substantive alternate view. The issues addressed in these articles were *creaming* (2 of them) and *charters' treatment of teachers* (the third). All of the articles that had to do with problematizing standards, accountability, testing, pay for performance or the benefit of unions were written in response to articles or editorials written and published by employees of *The New York Times*. This dominant authorship of readers to form the dissenting opinion contrasts with the authorship of the dominant themes.

Finding dissent in letters to the editor is not surprising—after all letters to the editor exist in order for people to react, either positively or negatively, to articles published by the newspaper. In the case of the articles reviewed, this trend is evident in my coding of attitude towards charters in letters to the editor showing some level of balance (45% positive, 27% non-judgmental, 27% negative). What I find more significant is that there was so little substantive dissent in editorials, opinion pieces or news articles. The coverage of these issues in articles and editorials published is characterized by their relative unquestioning adherence to the dominant themes.

While certainly a keen reader may look to "letters" to find dissenting voices and alternate opinions, do most readers? Also, how do letters impact reader thinking? Where letters are characterized as "opinion" and news characterized more as truth, are letters thus marginalized? Whereas editorials reflect the opinions of the editorial board and regular op/ed columnists have the validation of being employees, letters have no such clout—

although interestingly the collection of letters described here are written by principals, teachers, graduate students in education, professors of education, and thus in some way may actually have more claim to credence than any of *The New York Times'* writers about whom we have no explicit biographical information other then knowing they are employed by *The New York Times*.

On a different note, I find the presence of these dissenting voices important supporting evidence that my observations of dominant themes is shared by other readers.

Frequency of dissenting opinions.

Eleven of the 14 articles containing substantive counter-arguments devoted substantial space to these contrasting opinions for a total of just over 7% (11 of 151 articles printed) of the total coverage by *The New York Times*. However, this frequency vastly overstates the amount of coverage that these alternate opinions receive given the relative length of letters to the editor (*The New York Times* asks for no more than 150 words, the longest of the ones printed was 167). The total word count of these alternate opinions was just over 1,500. Given that the total word count of all documents reviewed was over 170,000, the substantive dissenting coverage from the dominant themes was slightly under 1%.

On the one hand, I find this infrequency of substantive dissenting opinion surprising in that news should theoretically cover multiple sides of a story and give voice to multiple opinions. On the other hand, given the premise about "common sense of education" as detailed in my exploration of critical pedagogy, the lack of dissenting coverage should not be surprising, rather it should be seen as somewhat expected and perhaps further validation that these common sense notions are such widely held beliefs that *The New York Times* does not consider them worth questioning.

While I have documented why the dominant discourse concerns me, I find it interesting that at least some readers consider these dominant discourses worth questioning and that *The New York Times* considers printing these alternate opinions worthwhile. I do wonder, for reasons already articulated, how these alternate opinions are heard by the general readership. Does the existence of these letters balance *The New York Times'* coverage, or does it merely give the illusion of balance and the possibility for *The New York Times* to defend itself by saying they have allowed these voices to be heard?
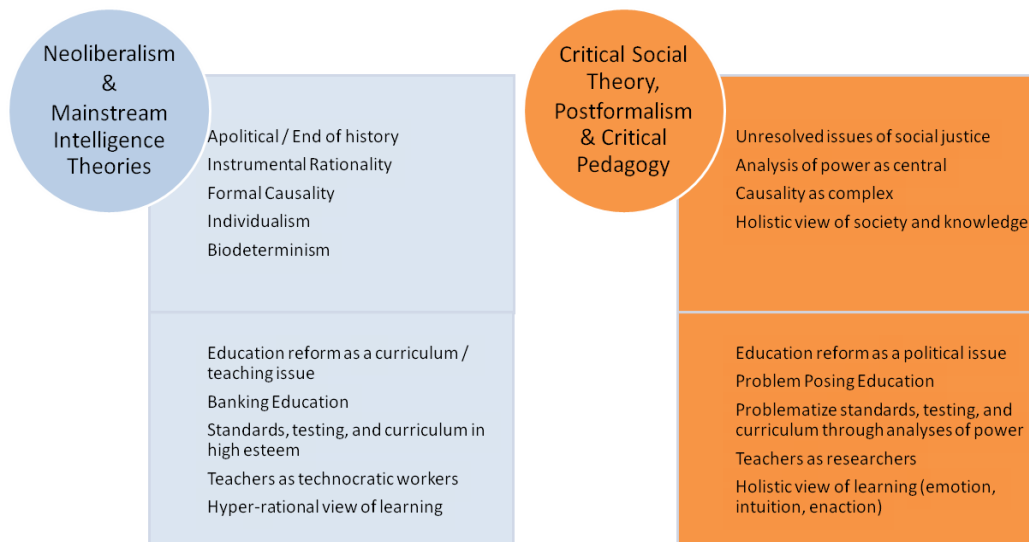
Chapter 8

Conclusions

This chapter discusses what I consider essential observations and reactions of the media coverage of charter schools as well as how this research impacts understandings of postformalism and critical pedagogy.

Revisiting Foundational Themes

I began this dissertation with an interrogation of my evolving views of education. I traced these views as they progressed, and continue to progress, during my time in graduate school. I explored how critical pedagogy challenged my technocratic view of teaching and learning and challenged me to consider a more complex, critically informed viewpoint. In chapters 2 and 3, I developed two contrasting views of education and education reform: one defined by neoliberalism and traditional theories of intelligence, the other defined by critical social theory, postformalism and critical pedagogy. In chapter 4, I summarized these viewpoints with the following diagram which contrasts the two positions. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation these two contrasting viewpoints impact ideas of education both at the concrete pedagogical level as well as at the macro level *vis-à-vis* conceptualization of purpose.

Figure 1: Contrasting Theories of Education

Neoliberalism & Mainstream Intelligence Theories

- Apolitical / End of history
- Instrumental Rationality
- Formal Causality
- Individualism
- Biodeterminism

- Education reform as a curriculum / teaching issue
- Banking Education
- Standards, testing, and curriculum in high esteem
- Teachers as technocratic workers
- Hyper-rational view of learning

Critical Social Theory, Postformalism & Critical Pedagogy

- Unresolved issues of social justice
- Analysis of power as central
- Causality as complex
- Holistic view of society and knowledge

- Education reform as a political issue
- Problem Posing Education
- Problematize standards, testing, and curriculum through analyses of power
- Teachers as researchers
- Holistic view of learning (emotion, intuition, enaction)

In my initial exploration of charter schools, I had both high hopes and hesitations about the potential for charters to positively impact education reform. The hopes originated from the idea of creating innovative space. Given my own background in private schools, I was attracted to this independence and, at one point, thought that I might like to start or help run a charter school. My reservations grew from conversations with my brother about how he characterized the work he had done with charters as a volunteer board member. My concerns were about the potential ways discussions about successful charters might position student failure in traditional public schools. These concerns were reinforced by my analysis of neoliberalism and intelligence theories, specifically how these foundational frames may be used to rationalize the stratification of student outcomes along lines of class and race through discourses of victim blaming.

Summary of Observations about the Dominant Themes that Emerged from Analysis of the Media Coverage of Charters

I began my analysis of media coverage of charters unsure about what I would find. Would the coverage focus on innovation and developing new ways of thinking about and enacting education reform or would the coverage demonize failing students and failing schools? Would the coverage of charters speak to different components of the two educational frames I had developed? Or would the coverage heavily focus on one at the expense of the other? What unexpected issues would emerge?

For review, my summary observations of the dominant themes of charter schools were as follows:

Magazines:

The magazine coverage of charter schools is dominated by positive coverage, specifically portraying charter schools as school reform efforts that create disciplined, rigorous environments lead by effective devoted teachers, willing to spend extra time if necessary to be successful. This reform is facilitated by charters schools being freed from traditional

educational oversights and results in high levels of academic achievement,
high college matriculation rates, and high ranking as compared to
traditional public schools.

The New York Times:

Charter schools are publicly financed, independently run, high achieving,
innovative schools that enjoy bipartisan support and have marginal
substantive negative critique. Their commitment to academic rigor in a
disciplined environment serves as an important model for educational
reform. Struggling public schools would do well to emulate this model or
cities and states would do well to replace struggling publicly run schools
with privately managed charters that have a proven track record of
success.

And the dominant themes that emerged about general issues of education and
education reform were:

Magazines:

The achievement gap between poor and rich and between US students and
international students is evidence that the US education system is in need
of reform. These reform efforts should begin with developing standards for
achievement and insisting that people who work in education are
accountable to those standards. Otherwise our country is at risk of falling
economically behind the rest of the world. Since teachers are the most
important variable in the effectiveness of education, effective reform
includes tying teacher evaluation and pay to the achievement level of their
students on standardized tests. Teacher unions protect ineffective teachers
and oppose accountability based educational reform necessary to help
more students achieve at higher levels.

The New York Times:

The educational context in which charters are positioned characterizes
schools as currently falling short of their mandate and in need of reform,
innovation or change. Teachers are explicitly identified as the most
important variable in the educational process. The change needed is

articulated as being a call for accountability in which the persons needing to be held accountable are teachers and the manner in which their level of accountability can be measured is the performance of their students on standardized tests. Teacher unions are portrayed negatively, specifically positioning them as being most interested in protecting themselves to the point of being obstructionist of policies that might benefit students.

These observations of dominant themes most closely align with the model of education that emerges from neoliberalism and mainstream intelligence as I have outlined them in this work. For example, the focus on standardizing curriculum around a hyper-focus of increasing test scores reflects a mainstream view of intelligence theories. The focusing of teachers' responsibilities as being solely about meeting the goal of increasing scores embodies a technocratic view of what it means to teach and the assumption that competition will benefit everyone emerges from neoliberal ideology. At the same time, the dominant themes fail, for the most part, to reflect understandings of postformalism and critical pedagogy. For example, they do not consider exploring issues such as poverty or the perception of opportunity as important to debates about school reform nor do they interrogate the socio-cultural bias of testing or consider what other purposes of school might be important beyond simply raising test scores. I use the modifiers "most closely" and "for the most part" in deference to the understanding that this analysis is not a simple binary that can be understood in simple generalized terms. The manner in which the dominant coverage of charters embraces the importance of teachers and the complexity that "letters to the editor" add to the overall media coverage of charters reviewed here are good examples of how binary descriptions fail to capture important complexities of my analysis.

Summary of My Responses to these Observations

Initially, I was surprised by the media coverage of charters.

While my reading of critical pedagogical scholarship, such as Kumashiro's articulation of common sense understandings of schools, or Giroux's expressions of frustration about the way dominant discourses marginalize critical

viewpoints, should probably have prepared me for this outcome, my own personal history had not. In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I wondered why I had considered education a non-political enterprise whose reform could be solved with a pragmatic approach of best practices. My observations of this media coverage of charter schools provide at least a partial answer. To the extent that this coverage is reflective of the viewpoints to which I myself had been exposed, my starting point on this journey should not be surprising. Furthermore, to the extent that the dominant media discourse observed here, reflects mainstream common sense understandings of schools, the observations provide strong evidence confirming the way critical scholars characterize common sense views. One result of this research is that my initial skepticism about critical scholars' characterization of common sense views of education as well as their claims of media bias excluding critical viewpoints has waned, replaced by an increasing curiosity about how foundational frames can impact ideas of schooling and what other issues media may cover in systematically partial ways.

These initial feelings of surprise have given way to frustration and anger. These feelings of frustration and anger emerge from the ways I have observed the coverage of charters has focused on aspects of charters that serve to reinforce common sense understandings of school—common sense understandings of schools that fail to engage with critical issues that I feel are important for meaningful innovation and reform. In doing so, the coverage of charters reviewed here does a disservice to the potential of charters to engage the public in a discussion about the complexity of education and education reform.

A critical pedagogical perspective suggests that we should not limit the dialogue about school reform to simply be about test performance. This perspective suggests that dialogue about school reform must include discussing the purpose of schools within a democratic society committed to social justice, not simply within a capitalist society focused on increasing GDP per capita.

I believe the two most important injustices the media coverage I have reviewed does to the potential of the charter movement to impact the ways in which the public understands issues of education and educational reform are:

1) narrowing the definition of educational purpose to be about achievement on standardized measures of assessment and thus constricting the potential for the dialog about charter schools to engage in discussions of the purpose of schools within a democratic society;

2) blaming current educational failures on teachers and thus dismissing the opportunity to use charters and charter reform as an opportunity to engage in a dialog about the complexity of educational success and failure that would also consider issues of poverty, social capital, perceived future opportunities or any of the myriad of other systemic issues that scholars of critical pedagogy would consider important.

I recognize that my frustration and anger transcends just the media coverage of charter schools. I would be negligent if I did not also critique flaws within the legislation itself (e.g., a hyper-focus on standardized assessment) and with the implementation of the legislation (e.g., the charter renewal's tendency to focus on easily measurable outcomes such as standardized test scores and cost controls rather than assessing whether the school is achieving its mission). Lipman and Haines (2007) articulate this concern in the following manner:

> The market environment of charters results in making the former model [those about "privatization and accountability"] more likely to succeed than the latter [those about "developing possibilities for more democratically developed and administered public schools that respond to the often marginalized needs, interests, and values of minority students and communities"] because charter schools that adhere to the underlying market philosophy, trim budgets to reduce operating expenses (e.g., lower teacher wages, limited services to special education students, or fewer extracurricular options), and contract out services to EMOs, while pursuing educational programs that focus on student success on standardized tests, are likely to succeed in the charter school reform environment. Meanwhile those that use charter school reform to develop and administer schools around notions of community participation, democracy, and non-traditional non-dominant forms of valued knowledge

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must fight a fierce counter-stream of overarching neoliberal policy. (p. 483).

I would also be remiss not to recognize that, despite some of the laws shortcomings, the local context of charter school reform is decidedly complex. The story I reviewed in chapter 7 of Trinity School (Quinn & Ethridge, 2006) and its ability to transcend the often constricting mandates of standardized assessments to create a rich holistic program serves as an important reminder that these issues are never simple and cannot be categorically generalized.

Given these complexities, I contend the media have a choice in how to cover this debate. The media could use charter implementation as an opportunity to interrogate a variety of complex educational reform issues, rather than portraying a simplistic, generalized view reflective of common sense understandings of schools. In this light, *The New York Times'* claim of "All the News That's Fit to Print" takes on an interesting meaning.

As discussed in the opening three chapters, an important component of critical pedagogical scholars' research is to analyze power. I also reviewed the importance of this consideration in reviewing the specific methodological considerations for my analysis. With this in mind, it is useful to ask: whose interest does this coverage serve? And whose interest is marginalized? As noted in the opening comments of my autobiography, Brantlinger pointed out that the current educational systems operate as a veil of meritocracy but actually serves to perpetuate middle class advantage. This viewpoint was reiterated in various forms by many of the critical scholars reviewed in chapters 1-3. Specifically, I reviewed similar claims by Giroux, Apple, Gresson, Kincheloe and Kumashiro.

One conclusion I draw from this insight is that the avoidance of dealing with critical issues of educational reform in the media coverage of charter schools serves to protect the interest of the middle class both by maintaining the current system and by fixating blame in a manner that decentralizes class issues of systemic injustice (such as the role of poverty, the lack of meaningful opportunity for successful students from marginalized populations or the inherent class/racial bias of standardized assessments) and replaces them with pragmatic issues of

teacher effectiveness. Identifying the pragmatic issue of teacher effectiveness as the most important issue creates a path to support change that does not threaten the status quo. In fact it nicely dovetails with the neoliberal ideology (and its fixation on individualism and technocratic rationality) that I have argued is a defining characteristic of the status quo.

It is important to note that this locus of blame on teachers reflects a shift from the victim blaming that was outlined in the discourses reviewed in the initial chapters of this dissertation. This movement can be understood as a shift away from blaming individual students and families for the systemic achievement gaps between rich and poor or white and other, to focusing the blame on teachers. While in no way belittling the importance of teachers (the importance of teachers is central for critical pedagogy), the simplification of blame to rest solely with teachers has dramatic consequences. Importantly, this blame continues to protect middle class advantage by not acknowledging the issues of poverty, test bias, unequal access to opportunity, etc. that would force the middle and upper classes to reflect more critically on the systemic injustices inherent in our current society. This shift, as it appears in the coverage of charter schools, is important for critical scholars to recognize and incorporate into their writing and reflections about the current zeitgeist.

Final Thoughts

While I do not believe the charter movement is the answer to educational reform, I do believe that discussing the issues that arise from critical research about the charter movement has enormous potential to engage people in a critically informed, thoughtful dialog about the complexities of educational reform. I believe the potential for this dialog is evidenced in my charter school review and in my narrative responses to my observations. Issues such as the pedagogical shortcomings of the KIPP model and its potential to undermine democratic ideals, the complexity of trying to create autonomy and freedom to innovate in a system constrained by the restrictions of the testing and standards inherent in the No Child Left Behind legislation, and the challenges of

interrogating structural injustices in a system constrained by neoliberal ideology's championing of individual responsibility and accountability are all vital considerations to reforming education in a manner that will help transcend the systemic injustices of our current system—injustices that are acknowledged when Arne Duncan names these injustices as the "civil rights movement of our generation" (NYT9). I am saddened that this opportunity has been forsaken by the majority of the media coverage reviewed here and, for the most part, relegated to letters to the editor.

On a different note, I am thankful for the opportunity to do this research. Through this exploration, I have become much clearer about my own critical pedagogical views of education and educational reform and much more aware of the need to be a thoughtfully skeptical consumer of news. While I am unsure about the hope expressed at the end of chapter 3, I am confident in my ability to work towards achieving it. As Joe Kincheloe (2009d) ended his foreword to *Rocking Your World*, "I can think of no better way to spend [my] life" (p. xi).

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