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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE PREFERRED WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SECONDARY TEACHERS WITH EXPERIENCE IN BOTH A  
DISTRICT TRADITIONAL SCHOOL AND A DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOL

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

CoriAndré Cerise Crane

October, 2017

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.— Lao Tzu

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## ABSTRACT

A teacher's working conditions can affect his or her performance, satisfaction, how long he or she stays at a particular school site, and how long he or she stays in the profession. In order to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, working conditions need to be as optimal as possible.

As demands placed upon teachers continue to increase, more needs to be studied about what constitutes optimal working conditions.

The purpose of this hermeneutic, phenomenological study was to investigate the working conditions and professional beliefs of 8 Southern California secondary (6th-12th grade) school teachers who had 2 years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school, with at least 5 years of consecutive full-time teaching experience, to learn more about what constituted ideal working conditions for secondary teachers. More specifically, this study, via in-depth individual interviews, invited participants to (a) describe the work conditions they experienced in a traditional setting, (b) describe the work conditions they experienced in a charter setting, (c) compare the traditional and charter school work conditions that they experienced, and (d) describe what they believe to be the ideal school work conditions for secondary teachers.

This study had 3 conclusions related to working conditions in both traditional public and district charter secondary school settings. The first was that teaching at the secondary level is professionally challenging, in all types of environments. The second was that teachers prefer a blend of traditional public and district charter school environments. The last was that teachers like to have autonomy with opportunities to collaborate and build relationships with colleagues.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Background of the Study**

Teachers have a number of school types in which to work, for example, traditional public, district charter, or even private schools. In addition to school type, teachers even have an option of deciding if they want to teach in an urban or affluent community. The ultimate goal of a teacher is to work in a school where he or she feels happy, effective, and supported. To find the most supportive and happy work environment, teachers sometimes find themselves moving schools, for example, moving from a traditional public school to a charter school or vice versa. Teachers who experience these transitions not only gain professional experience; they also learn what they ultimately want in a positive, well organized, and supportive work environment. This is important because experienced teachers are the key to ensuring a quality education for all students (Bishay, 1996; Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008).

More so now, educated citizens are directly related to economic global dominance and recognition. Countries are taking a more in-depth look at what factors influence global dominance and an educated citizen with multiple skill sets are what modern day organizations seek. Since the inception of public education in the United States, education has been viewed as the great equalizer to social, economic, and political opportunity. “The United States, like many countries, is transforming its educational system within the context of the changing global economic system” (Hursh & Martina, 2003, para. 4).

Policy makers today are bombarded with advice from educational groups peddling solutions to the problem of teacher quality and retention (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). Efforts at the federal government level have caught the American public’s eye through a number of federal education policies. Early U.S. national attention came with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*:

*The Imperative for Education Reform* in 1983 where a careful study was conducted on the quality of education across the nation (Center for the Study of Mathematics Curriculum, 2005; Graham, 2013). The study's findings sparked the nation's attention to its first piece of education federal policy:

The commission found few signs of encouragement about the American education system. The study found that test scores were rapidly on the decline, teacher salaries were low and poor teacher training programs were leading to a high turnover rate among educators, and other industrialized countries were threatening to outpace America's technological superiority. The report provided mounds of statistical evidence that the nation's education system was in a crisis. (Graham, 2013, para. 10)

Since the publication of the government's investigation, "most schools have taken drastic steps to meet the report's findings to adopt more rigorous and measurable standards for learning" (Graham, 2013, para. 8). The document made a number of recommendations for the nation's schools to adopt, for example, more rigorous high school graduation requirements, school districts move to an eleven month contract to give teachers adequate time for preparation for each new year and to allow more in-service time, and teachers be more responsible by their communities for providing leadership in attaining these reforms; meanwhile leaving reform strategies up to individual schools and districts (Center for the Study of Mathematics Curriculum, 2005). "Even some problems that *A Nation at Risk* raised three decades ago have been made worse in the face of budget cuts and other reforms" (Graham, 2013, para. 11). "Over the last decade education in the U.S. has undergone the largest transformation within its history" (Hursh & Martiana, 2003, p. 1).

Under President George W. Bush, a second piece of national education policy was implemented in 2001. “In January, 2001 President of the United State, George W. Bush announced *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB); his framework for bipartisan education reform” (United States Department of Education, 2004, para. 2).

NCLB incorporates the principles and strategies used to increase accountability for States, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for States and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the use of Federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for younger children. (United States Department of Education, 2009, para. 3)

The NCLB would significantly increase the choices available to the parents of students attending Title I schools that fail to meet standards (United States Department of Education, 2009).

One important goal of No Child Left Behind was to breathe new life into the “flexibility for accountability” bargain with States and to give states and school districts unprecedented flexibility in the use of Education funds in exchange for strong accountability for results. (United States Department of Education, 2009, para. 5)

Under President Barack Obama, a third piece of national education policy was implemented in 2009. “President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education” (United States Department of Education, 2009, para. 1).

Through *Race to the Top*, the Department of Education asks states to advance reforms around four specific areas: (a) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students

to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy, (b) build data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals, especially where they are need most, (c) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and(d) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools. (United States Department of Education, 2009, para. 2)

To encourage state involvement, the federal government attached \$4.35 billion in incentives for states to create systems to support the initiatives four areas of growth. “Awards in Race to the Top go to states leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive education reform” (United States Department of Education, 2014, para. 2). As a result of increased national attention on public education, federal education policy demands have filtered down to the classroom where teachers’ work experiences are different in particular environments.

### **Satisfaction**

The benefits of teacher satisfaction for both teachers and pupils points to the importance of studying how teachers feel about work (Bishay, 1996).A key finding notes that employee satisfaction has been found to be a reliable predictor of retention (Perrachione et al., 2008). When teachers are satisfied, they are more productive in the classroom, more motivated to perform in the classroom, more involved with students, and more involved in the communities (Shields, 2009). A well-adjusted and satisfied teacher can contribute a lot to the well-being of his/her pupils (Chaudhari, 2012). A dissatisfied teacher can become irritable and may create tensions which can have a negative influence on the students’ learning process and it consequently affects their academic growth (Chaudhari, 2012). Work in this area also



demonstrates that when teachers had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues, receive recognition from supervisors and administrators, and improve their professional skills and abilities (Kushman, 1992) they were significantly more satisfied with their role as teacher than those who did not have these experiences (Perrachione et al., 2008).

Although relatively few studies have examined the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and their demographic characteristics findings in this area have shown that job satisfaction has been positively related to age, gender, marital status, grade level taught, and education level (Perrachione et al., 2008). In public schools, younger and less experienced teachers have higher levels of satisfaction than older and more experienced teachers (National Center For Education Statistics, 1997). Ma and MacMillan (2010) found that older and more experienced teachers expressed significantly less satisfaction with their professional role than their younger and less experienced colleagues (Perrachione et al., 2008). Female teachers tended to be more satisfied than male teachers while married women were more satisfied than unmarried women and men (Perrachione et al., 2008). Research in this area also indicates that teachers who went into teaching because of inherent professional values were more satisfied than those whose entry into the occupation was for economic reasons (Perrachione et al., 2008). Some teachers, particularly those with advanced degrees, may become dissatisfied with the short career ladders present in secondary education and seek other employment opportunities (Renzulli, Parrott & Beattie, 2011). In public schools, younger and less experienced teachers have higher levels of satisfaction than older and more experienced teachers were (National Center For Education Statistics, 1997).

## **Attrition**

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) as cited by Perrachione et al. (2008), teacher attrition problems cost the nation in excess of \$7 billion annually for recruitment, administrative processing and hiring, and professional development and training of replacement teachers. Not surprisingly, attrition rates are higher in high-poverty than low-poverty schools, and teachers who leave high-poverty schools are more than twice as likely as those in low-poverty schools to leave because of dissatisfaction with teaching (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Most traditional public schools experience comparatively low turnover (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001).

## **Working Conditions**

Teachers prefer to teach in schools that resemble schools they went to (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011). Although resources and working conditions certainly matter, research suggest that teachers choose to enter and remain in schools where they feel well supported in their efforts to teach, irrespective of student wealth or retaining teachers (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

Scholars from around the nation find evidence consistent with the belief that teachers react strongly to working conditions as measured by the achievement of students and the racial composition of schools (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). Previous research has also pointed out that higher-paying districts provide better working conditions that may be the real reason why teachers choose them. This makes an important point that an equilibrium correlation between teacher ability and pay (or schooling) does not imply a causal link between shifts in district-level salary schedules and teacher quality; For example, higher pay can promote the retention of poor teachers and in the long run, its effects may be dampened if a district fails to recognize and

reward able teachers (Lakdawalla, 2006). Wealthy districts that pay high salaries and offer pleasant working conditions rarely experience shortages in any field (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Teachers in more affluent communities typically have much better working conditions, including small class sizes and pupil loads, and much more control over decision making in their schools than do teachers in schools serving low-income students (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Urban schools not only offer larger class sizes and pupil loads, fewer materials, and less desirable teaching conditions, they also offer less professional autonomy and lower levels of teacher participation in decision making related to curriculum, texts, materials, or teaching policies (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

Very little is known on the topic of teacher working conditions, attrition, and retention in Southern California schools. Southern California is home to a very ethnically diverse community. While continuing to make this state home to many, educating its diverse community will continue to be a challenge and area of growth. This study would contribute to the field of teacher satisfaction, working conditions, attrition, and retention in traditional public school and district charter schools because there has been an increase in the number of public schools, particularly charter schools, where the topic of teacher satisfaction and retention deserves further investigation to identify areas of growth for Southern California teachers.

What is unknown about contemporary working environments for teachers across the nation are what steps are being taken to enhance teacher preparedness, satisfaction, and retention rates in Southern California's public traditional and charter settings. What is also unknown about contemporary working environments for teachers in Southern California are the average number of years teachers are staying in public traditional schools before switching to a district charter school and the reasons for switching. Vice versa, what is unknown about contemporary working

environments for Southern California teachers are the average number of years teachers are staying in district charter schools before switching to a public traditional school and the reasons for switching.

What is known about what teachers perceive to be the ideal work environment is that teachers prefer environments that are supportive by administrators, parents, and peers (Dolton & Van der Klaauw, 1999). Teachers are effective and satisfied in an environment that is realistic of what can and cannot be done based on professional expertise and experience (Santoro, 2011). What is also known about what secondary teachers perceive to be the ideal working environment is one where teachers have the autonomy to deliver instruction where students can experience authentic learning that is not attached to standardized assessments (Garcia, 1986).

Lastly, what is also unknown is what secondary teachers perceive to be the ideal work environment and strategies and support groups that are available for teachers who are entering or who are currently in the field of 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade education to assist as professional support when entering education. What is also unknown is what makes teachers want to teach in one particular setting, for example, a district public school or a district charter school, and how these environments have varied realities when it comes to teacher, student, administrative, and parental involvement. Each of the above environments has different missions, policies, and instructional expectations. The result of each environment having different expectations will determine the experiences secondary teachers have and will also determine if a teacher commits long or short term to that particular setting and teaching in general (Dolton & Van der Klaauw, 1999).

## **Problem Statement**

Student performance on a global scale is important for first world nations like the United States who display economic, political, and social dominance around the world (United States

Department of Education, 2014). To ensure nations achieve global economic dominance, properly trained and supported teachers have to be in classroom. Having talented and well prepared teachers is key for student success because the skills and training learned in the classroom are essentially facilitated through the guidance and instruction of a trained and credentialed teacher (Garcia, 1986). Teacher quality is a factor when determining if students are academically prepared and performing at proficient levels. One of the main core challenges facing primary and secondary education is retaining qualified teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008). Turnover among the nation's teachers rank significantly higher than other professions, emphasized further by the alarming number of teachers leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching (Perrachione et al., 2008). The organization of schools affects the lives of all members-students, teachers, and administrators (Less, Dedrick,& Smith, 1991) .The working conditions of a teacher are important when determining how effective a teacher will be (Stuit & Smith, 2012). Effective schools cultivate shared beliefs among teachers regarding instructional goals and practices (Stuit & Smith, 2012). There is value to having satisfied teachers in Southern California traditional secondary and charter secondary schools because one of the main challenges facing primary and secondary education is retaining qualified teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008). While continuing to make California home to many, educating its diverse community will continue to be a challenge and area of growth.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to investigate the work conditions and professional beliefs of eight Southern California secondary (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school teachers who have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time

teaching experience to learn more about what constitutes ideal work conditions for secondary teachers. More specifically, this study via in-depth individual interviews, invited participants to explore the following areas (a) describe the work conditions they experienced in a traditional setting, (b) describe the work conditions they experienced in a charter setting, (c) compare the traditional and charter school work conditions that they experienced, and (d) describe what they believe to be the idea school work conditions for secondary teachers.

### **Importance of the Study**

California education policy makers, county offices of education administrators, school district administrators, secondary school site administrators and secondary classroom teachers might benefit from the outcomes of this study. Learning more about working conditions of Southern California secondary teachers in district traditional and charter settings might provide new information about secondary classroom teacher realities and challenges and how realities and challenges influence teacher satisfaction, retention, and teacher quality (Boyd et al., 2011; Dolton & Van der Klaauw, 1999; Garcia, 1986; Santoro, 2011). The topic of teacher dissatisfaction will continue to be one of investigation which adds to existing professional literature because teachers will always be a variable of analysis when conducting studies related to student performance and national education rankings.

It is important that this study be conducted at this particular time because the expectations of educating the nation's youth to be productive and functioning adults in our globalized economy has continued and will continue to be a priority (United States Department of Education, 2014). Based on current U.S. global rankings, the country ranks low on academic performance (Desilver, 2017). While increasing U.S. global ranking is important, analyzing factors that affect educating America's youth, in this case teachers, would be a significant

starting point in identifying sources of teacher dissatisfaction and low retention rates in public schools.

### **Definition of Terms**

**At-will contract.** This means that an employer can terminate an employee at any time for any reason, except an illegal one, or for no reason without incurring legal liability. Likewise, an employee is free to leave a job at any time for any or no reason with no adverse legal consequence (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

**Burnout.** The condition of someone who has become very physically and emotionally tired after doing a difficult job for a long time (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

**Collaboration with colleagues.** The extent to which teachers feel supported by their colleagues and included in the school community, and the frequency with which they meet with their colleagues to discuss instruction (Wei, Patel, & Young, 2014).

**District charter schools.** Defined as public schools that may provide instruction in any of grades K-12 that are created organized by a group of teachers, parents, community leaders, or a community-based organization (California Department of Education, 2014).

**District traditional schools.** Defined as public kindergarten through grade twelve and/or adult education institutions that are supported with public funds, are authorized by action of and operated under the oversight of a publically constituted local or state education agency, provide educational services to all students who are enrolled, have an appropriately credentialed administrator, usually principal, who is responsible for all aspects of school administration including supervision and evaluation of curriculum, and assessment of academic achievement and school accountability, have an administrator, usually a principal, with access to and

responsibility for maintaining official student records for all enrolled students, and are non-sectarian (California Department of Education, 2014).

**Facilities.** Facilities are buildings and grounds, parking lots, playing fields, and fixed equipment (California Department of Education, 2016a).

**Mentoring and support.** The extent to which teachers feel supported by their colleagues and included in the school community (Wei et al., 2014).

**Professional development.** Defined as collaborative learning aligned to student learning and standards that prepares and trains staff (California Department of Education, 2014).

**Resources.** The extent to which teachers have the necessary technology, instructional materials, and classroom supplies (Wei et al., 2014).

**School leadership.** Overall school leadership is the extent to which school leaders provide teachers with opportunities to influence school decisions, communicate goals and expectations, and support teachers with resources, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration (Wei et al., 2014).

**Secondary teacher.** Secondary school teachers instruct students in junior and senior high schools. Secondary school teachers generally conduct classes only in their field of interest. Academic subjects taught in secondary schools include science, English, mathematics, and history (Graham, 2013).

**Student behavior.** Teacher's responsiveness to student differences and how those responses influence student engagement in learning (Wei et al., 2014).

**Teacher attrition.** Teacher attrition is generally positioned within research addressing teacher shortage, the wastage of resources and expertise, as well as that concerning teachers' lowly status and poor working conditions (Macdonald, 1999).



**Teacher empowerment.** The extent to which teachers believe they are able to provide high quality instruction, provide input on important decision making, are supported by colleagues in the community, and teachers are provided opportunities for professional growth (Wei et al., 2014).

**Teacher retention.** Characteristics of schools and districts that successfully recruit and retain teachers, and the types of policies that show evidence of efficacy in recruiting and retaining teachers (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

**Teacher satisfaction.** Job satisfaction refers to the level of teacher satisfaction by matters related to these conditions: student achievement, decision-making ability, self-growth, and so on. This research considers the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher empowerment, which includes dimensions of job satisfaction that contribute to teacher empowerment (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005).

**Work environment.** This is the location where a task is completed. When pertaining to a place of employment, the work environment involves the physical geographical location as well as the immediate surroundings of the workplace, such as a construction site or office building. Typically involves other factors relating to the place of employment, such as the quality of the air, noise level, and additional perks and benefits of employment such as free child care or unlimited coffee, or adequate parking (BusinessDictionary, 2014).

**Working conditions.** Include factors such as school leadership, teacher empowerment, collaboration with colleagues, professional development, mentoring and support, facilities, resources, and student behavior influence teacher behavior, retention, and student achievement (Wei et al., 2014).

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual model that will be used as a guide is outlined in the “The Black Box” by authors Wei et al. (2014) who have articulated four areas of focus that influence teacher retention rates which are (a) working conditions, (b) instruction, (c) teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy, and (d) teacher evaluation (Wei et al., 2014; see Appendix A). Of the four areas, this study will focus more aggressively on *working conditions* which includes eight sub-factors that contribute to a satisfactory supportive environment which are (a) school leadership, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) collaboration with colleagues, (d) professional development, (e) mentoring/support, (f) facilities, (g) resources, and (h) student behavior (Wei et al., 2014; see Appendix A). This conceptual framework will be used to inform the study research design, instrumentation, data analysis, and interpretation of findings. Further details regarding the conceptual model’s working condition’s eight sub-factors will be discussed in Chapter Two.

## **Research Questions**

With regards to eight Southern California secondary classroom teachers who have a minimum of two years’ experience in the same content area or grade level and who have equitable teaching experience in both a traditional public and charter school settings with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience, the following four questions guided the study’s research:

1. What were teachers’ working conditions in a district traditional secondary school?
2. What were teachers’ working conditions in a district charter school environment?
3. What comparisons can be made from secondary teachers’ public school district traditional school and charter school working condition experiences?

4. What do teachers believe to be the ideal secondary school working conditions to support quality teacher performance, foster teacher satisfaction, and promote teacher retention?

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited to eight secondary teachers in Southern California who have a minimum of two years' experience in the same content area or grade level and who have equitable experience in both traditional public school and district charter school secondary settings with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience. This study was also delimited to in-depth interviews with each participant that were conducted either in person or virtually at a location, date, and time convenient for the participant and agreed upon by the researcher.

### **Limitations**

Sample size was the one limitation of the study. A small sample of eight teachers may not have been fully representative of the experiences and beliefs of the greater pool of secondary teachers in Southern California who have a minimum of two years of experience in the same content areas or grade level and who have equitable experience in both public traditional school and district charter school settings with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience and therefore the results were not necessarily generalizable. This study was also limited to single in-depth interviews with individuals and data that were self-reported.

### **Assumptions**

For this study, it was assumed that teacher satisfaction was related to the work environment. It was assumed that teacher satisfaction related to teacher quality and teacher quality impacted student learning. It was assumed that teachers, as professional educators, were

able to recollect and report their work environment experiences as accurately as possible and that they would demonstrate objectivity in comparing work environment experiences. Finally, it was assumed that teachers with experiences in diverse settings offered an important perspective regarding ideal and satisfying work environments for secondary teachers.

### **Organization of the Study**

This qualitative phenomenological narrative study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One provides the background, problem, purpose, importance, definitions, theoretical framework, research questions, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions that frame and make a case for the study. In Chapter Two, the researcher provides a review of the literature related to (a) conceptual model, (b) working conditions, (c) working conditions eight sub-factors, and (d) identifying and comparing working conditions eight sub-factors for traditional public versus district charter schools. Chapter Three explains and defines the methodology employed for this phenomenological study. Chapter Four presents the study's findings. Lastly, Chapter Five offers a discussion of the findings, shares conclusions, and provides recommendations for policy/practice changes and for future studies.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter presents the rationale for conducting research on the working conditions and beliefs of secondary teachers in Southern California. Student performance on a global scale is important for first world nations like the United States who display economic, political, and social dominance around the world (United States Department of Education, 2014). To ensure nations achieve global economic dominance, properly trained and supported teachers have to be in classrooms. Having talented and well prepared teachers are key for student success because the skills and training learned in the classroom are essentially facilitated through the guidance and instruction of a trained and credentialed teacher (Garcia, 1986). Teacher quality is a factor when determining if students are academically prepared and performing at proficient levels. One of the main core challenges facing primary and secondary education is retaining qualified teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008). Turnover among the nation's teachers rank significantly higher than other professions, emphasized further by the alarming number of teachers leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching (Perrachione et al., 2008). The organization of schools affects the lives of all members-students, teachers, and administrators (Less et al., 1991) The working conditions of a teacher are important when determining how effective a teacher will be (Stuit & Smith, 2012). Effective schools cultivate shared beliefs among teachers regarding instructional goals and practices (Stuit & Smith, 2012). There is value to having satisfied teachers in Southern California traditional secondary and charter secondary schools because one of the main challenges facing primary and secondary education is retaining qualified teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008). While continuing to make this state home to many, educating its diverse community will continue to be a challenge and area of growth.

This study consisted of eight variables which were: leadership, collaboration with colleagues, resources, mentoring/support, teacher empowerment, professional development, facilities, and student behavior (Wei et al., 2014). These variables were unique to this study because they involved eight specific factors that influence an organization's working environment. First, authors Wei et al. (2014) break leadership into two categories (a) overall school leadership and (b) distributed school leadership (Wei et al., 2014). Second, collaboration with colleagues is described by the authors as "the extent to which teachers feel supported by their colleagues and included in the school community, and the frequency with which they meet with their colleagues to discuss instruction" (Wei et al., 2014, p.10). Third, resources are described as "the extent to which teachers have the necessary technology, instructional materials, and classroom supplies" (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10). Fourth, mentoring and support is defined as "the extent to which teachers feel supported by their colleagues and included in the school community," (Wei et al., 2014, p.10). Fifth, teacher empowerment is defined in broad terms to fall under the general umbrella of teachers' ability to advocate for themselves, their students, and make the necessary steps toward supporting themselves and or others. Sixth, professional development is defined in terms of teacher's ability to access and participate in high quality professional development that focuses on instruction (Wei et al., 2014). Seventh, "previous research shows that inadequate facilities and lack of teaching materials are associate with high teacher turnover rates, although the association ranges from small to large" (Wei et al., 2014, p. 5). Eighth, student behavior is described as:

The extent to which teachers adjust their instruction to respond to students' levels of understanding and influences teachers' perception on the number of students paying

attention, engaged in classroom activities, complete homework, and about students who care about their academic performance. (Wei et al., 2014, p.10)

The literature review is organized into four sections, a description of the conceptual model focusing more attention to *working conditions*, defining working conditions under eight sub-factors, identifying and comparing working conditions eight sub-factor's in the traditional public school and district charter school settings, and lastly a chapter summary is given.

### **Conceptual Framework**

For the purposes of this study Opening the 'Black Box': Organizational Differences Between Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools by Wei et al. (2014) was used as the conceptual framework. "Previous studies comparing teachers in charter schools to their colleagues in traditional public schools provide limited understanding on the influential organizational factors because they focus solely on the differences in teacher characteristics or a limited number of working conditions" (Wei et al., 2014, p.3). Wei et al. (2014) recognize there are key factors that contribute to the work experience of teachers in both charter and traditional schools. "Previous literature indicates that teacher perception of school-level factors are predictive of teaching behavior, teacher retention, and student achievement" (Wei et al., 2014, p. 4). The authors of "The Black Box"(Wei et al., 2014) identify four significant factors that contribute to teacher retention and satisfaction which are (a) working conditions, (b) instruction, (c) teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy, and (d) teacher evaluation (Wei et al., 2014; see Appendix A).

For the purposes of this study *working conditions* was the factor most widely referred to when analyzing teacher preference-traditional public or district charter school. *Working conditions* play a significant factor for teachers in both a traditional public and district charter

school settings because realities in both environments are significantly different. (Wei et al., 2014). Under Wei et al.'s, (2014) *working conditions* contain eight sub-factors which are: (a) school leadership, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) collaboration with colleagues, (d) mentoring and support, (e) professional development, (f) resources, (g) facilities, and (h) student behavior (see Appendix A).

Effective school leadership, which includes instructional leadership, that is, expectations and systems facilitating effect instruction ,team goal-setting , and distributed leadership, that is, shared decision-making and expertise among staff is one of the most important factors influencing teacher behavior and student outcomes. School with effective leadership attract teachers and create productive and harmonious working relationships among staff members whereas schools with weak school leadership often have a higher likelihood of teachers leaving the school. (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10)

Differences in school leadership between charter and traditional public schools are limited. The studies that do explore these differences find mixed results with some studies reporting little difference between charter school leaders and traditional public school leaders and others finding more substantial differences (Wei et al., 2014).

For the purposes of this study, differentiating levels and examples of leadership is important because leadership at the traditional public school level is different from leadership at the district charter school level. For example, leadership at the traditional public school level could mean a superintendent or principal, whereas, leadership at the charter level could mean board members or regional directors. As a result of both traditional and charter schools having different examples of leadership, it is imperative throughout the study that specific job titles and school types (traditional public or charter) are clearly stated.



Collaboration among teachers has been found to influence teacher behavior and is associated with higher student performance and lower teacher turnover (Wei, et al., 2014). Collaboration and distributed leadership are mutually reinforcing and work together to promote positive school environments (Wei et al., 2014). “Previous research shows that inadequate facilities and lack of teaching materials are associated with high teacher turnover rates, although the association ranges from small to large” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 5). “Recent evidence on the association between school resources and student achievement is mixed, with some studies indicating a moderate to large positive association while others showed no association” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 6).

The importance of adequate support for teacher retention and the mixed findings of previous research suggest the need for future exploration of differences in the types and levels of support charter school teachers’ desire compared to their traditional public school colleagues. Paying close attention to *working conditions* is a ‘key dimension of school organization’ because these factors influence teacher behavior and retention, and ultimately student achievement. (Wei et al., 2014, p. 6)

### **Defining Working Condition’s Eight Sub-Factors**

**Leadership.** Wei et al. (2014) further dissect the term leadership by breaking it down into two categories: (a) overall school leadership and (b) distributed school leadership. “Overall school leadership is the extent to which school leaders provide teachers with opportunities to influence school decisions, communicate goals and expectations, and support teachers with resources, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10). “Distributed school leadership is the extent to which school leaders provide opportunities for teachers to be involved in important decision making and encourages them to share their

opinions” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10). Effective school leadership, which includes instructional leadership, that is, expectations and systems facilitating effective instruction (Boyd et al., 2011; Elmore, 2000); team goal-setting (Hallinger, 2003); and distributed leadership, that is, shared decision-making and expertise among staff (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) is one of the most important factors influencing teacher behavior and student outcomes (Wei et al., 2014). Schools with effective leadership attract teachers and create productive and harmonious working relationships among staff members (Boyd et al., 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003); whereas schools with weak school leadership often have a higher likelihood of teachers leaving the school (Boyd et al., 2011; Wei et al., 2014).

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For the purposes of this study, differentiating levels and examples of leadership is important because leadership at the traditional public school level is different from leadership at the district charter school level. For example, leadership at the traditional public school level could mean a superintendent or principal, whereas, leadership at the charter level could mean board members or regional directors. As a result of both traditional and charter schools having different examples of leadership, it is imperative throughout the study that specific job titles and school types (traditional public or charter) are clearly stated.

**Collaboration.** Authors Wei et al. (2014) go on to define collaboration with colleagues as “the extent to which teachers feel supported by their colleagues and included in the school community, and the frequency with which they meet with their colleagues to discuss instruction”

(p. 10). Collaboration among teachers has been found to influence teacher behavior and is associated with higher student performance and lower teacher turnover (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Collaboration and distributed leadership are mutually reinforcing and work together to promote positive school environments (Wei et al., 2014).

**Facilities.** “Previous research shows that inadequate facilities and lack of teaching materials are associated with high teacher turnover rates, although the association ranges from small to large” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 8).

**Resources.** Availability of resources, defined by Wei et al. (2014) as “the extent to which teachers have the necessary technology, instructional materials, and classroom supplies” (p. 10). “Recent evidence on the association between school resources and student achievement is mixed, with some studies indicating a moderate to large positive association while others showed no association” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 6).

**Support/mentoring.** The importance of adequate support for teacher retention and the mixed findings of previous research suggest the need for future exploration of differences in the types and levels of support charter school teachers’ desire compared to their traditional public school colleagues. Wei et al. (2014) define support and mentoring as “the extent to which teachers feel supported by their colleagues and included in the school community” (p.10).

**Student behavior.** Authors of “Opening the Black Box” (Wei et al., 2014) define student behavior as teacher’s responsiveness to student differences and how those responses influence student engagement in learning.

The extent to which teachers adjust their instruction to respond to students’ levels of understanding and influences teachers’ perception on the number of students paying

attention, engaged in classroom activities, complete homework, and about students who care about their academic performance. (Wei et al., 2014, p. 11).

**Teacher empowerment.** Teacher empowerment was defined in broad terms to fall under the general umbrella of teacher's ability to advocate for themselves, their students, and make the necessary steps toward supporting themselves and or others. According to Wei et al. (2014) , teacher empowerment can be defined as “the extent to which teachers believe they are able to provide high quality instruction, for example, using data to modify instruction, that meets the needs of all learners and build a classroom environment free of disruption and discipline problems” (p. 11). Teacher empowerment is further defined as “the extent to which teachers are satisfied with the teaching profession, school leadership, colleagues, and school environment” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 11). Lastly, teacher empowerment is defined as “the extent to which teacher evaluations are fair and clearly communicated, and provide teachers with formative feedback” (Wei et al., 2014, p.11).

**Professional development.** Wei et al. (2014) define professional development in terms of teacher's ability to access professional developments, participating in high quality professional developments, professional developments focusing on instruction, and the frequency of teachers who advance their skills. Access to professional developments is more narrowly defined by authors as “the extent to which teachers have the opportunity to participate in professional development during the school day, collaborate with teachers from other schools, and reflect on their professional development plan with school leadership” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10). Authors define participating in high quality professional development as “the extent to which teachers participate in content-specific professional development that builds on previous knowledge and is ongoing, coherent, and aligns with school priorities” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10).

The authors define professional developments that focus on instruction as “the extent to which teachers feel professional development aligns with their teaching assignment and provides them with necessary content knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom management strategies” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10). Authors define frequency of teaching advanced skills as “the degree to which teachers present students with assignments that encourage them to think critically, be creative, and connect across subject areas” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 10).

### **Traditional and Charter School Working Conditions and Comparisons**

The following sections are organized into eight sub-factors listed under *working conditions* in Wei et al.’s (2014) *Black Box* as mentioned in the conceptual model which include (a) school leadership, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) collaboration with colleagues, (d) professional development, (e) mentoring and support, (f) facilities, (g) resources, and (h) student behavior (Wei et al., 2014). First, the eight sub-factors will be used to identify key features and systems in each public school environment. Secondly, a comparison of each school environment and sub-factor will be made.

#### **Working Condition-Subfactor #1: School Leadership, Variable #1**

**Traditional school.** Most teachers will agree that one of the most important factors in a school’s success is its administration (Mihans, 2008). Schools with effective leadership attract teachers and create productive and harmonious working relationships among staff members; Whereas schools with weak school leadership often have a higher likelihood of teachers leaving the school (Wei et al., 2014). The volume of communication that teachers have with one another and with the principal has been shown to contribute positively to several teacher outcomes—the overall level of satisfaction, performance, and organizational efficacy. Because of this collegial communication, a participant in such an organizational culture has access to both intrinsic and

extrinsic sources of information about his or her performance (Less et al., 1991). Principals also play a key role in retention of novice teachers and influence novices' willingness to remain at the school and in teaching, often in spite of continuing stresses and classroom struggles that pressured them to quit (Wood, 2005). One of the ways that principals function as advocates for and retainers of novice teachers is by arranging ways in which novice teachers can extend their induction professional development learning on site (Wood, 2005).

**Charter school.** Most district charter operators and managers have experience in the business realm and have networks with professionals in other industries that can provide resources and other political influences (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). Administrators in charter schools typically do not hold an administrative credential and most likely have never been a teacher. Strong charter leaders use their ability to draw together diverse local constituencies—parents, community members, and teachers to network outside the immediate school community (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). Those running charter schools are generally free to pursue the regulatory approach to teacher quality by hiring only certified teachers and paying them according to uniform salary schedules, or to elect the deregulatory approach by hiring teachers without formal education training and rewarding them based on how much their students learn (Podgursky & Ballou 2001).

**Comparison of traditional and charter school's leadership.** When comparing school leadership in a charter setting to a traditional public setting, it appears charter leaders are more likely to use professional networks when trying to recruit resources for their school. In a traditional setting, more time is spent on site related matters, such as, discipline.

## **Working Condition-Subfactor #2: Teacher Empowerment, Variable #2**

**Traditional school.** Today's teachers encounter a range of classroom and social conditions-among them, multilingual classrooms, increased mainstreaming of special education students, growing numbers of students living in poverty and from single-parent families-that compound an already complex set of professional challenges; Given these added challenges, it is imperative that teachers be provided with much greater access to knowledge about teaching and learning before and during their careers (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). In disadvantaged, low-performing urban or inner city schools, teachers face great challenges on a daily basis and are expected to teach within communities that are plagued with enormous social problems. These social problems do not just filter into schools, they often consume them (Shields, 2009).

Teachers crave effective principals who make a "concerted effort to become personally involved in providing support for teachers" (Mihans, 2008, p. 763). For students, shortages of qualified teachers translate into enlarged class sizes, lack of access to higher courses, and poor teaching (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Once in the teaching position, one's salary is determined almost exclusively by years of experience and graduate degrees (along with any contract renegotiation about overall level of salaries). Urban teachers are fleeing urban schools in large numbers for positions that offer safety, support, autonomy, respect, higher pay, and freedom from managing disruptive student behaviors on a daily basis (Shields, 2009). Schools serving disadvantaged populations are harder to staff, they have higher teacher turnover and are likely to have more rookie teachers and more difficulty attracting experienced teachers (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010).

**Charter school.** One of the basic premises of charter schools is their autonomy in exchange for greater accountability results (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994). Neither charter

schools nor their teachers receive significant monetary rewards based on performance. More common are soft extrinsic rewards, such as faculty appreciation luncheons, recognition in school newsletters, and the like (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994). There is a common perception that charter schools demand more of their teachers' time (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). In two-thirds of the charter schools without unions, the work day for teachers was eight hours or more (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). The charter school work year also tends to be longer (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). Teachers with the status of employees-at-will were significantly more likely to work a longer school year than those covered by contracts (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001).

**Comparison of traditional and charter school's teacher empowerment.** When comparing teacher empowerment in the traditional setting, teachers appear to have a lot of responsibilities, whereas, teachers in charter setting may encounter challenges with teacher empowerment from the start of hire considering statistically who tends to get hired in charter schools. It appears in charter schools, teachers have more flexibility to create curriculum, however, have little training and preparation on being an effective teacher. As a consequence of little to no charter teacher training on behalf teachers are more likely to be dismissed from their at-will jobs because of poor performance, yet, are still marketable after their charter experience because of their prior credentials.

### **Working Condition-Subfactor #3: Collaboration With Colleagues, Variable #3**

**Traditional school.** A growing body of research suggest that better outcome are achieved by personal-communal school models that foster common learning experiences, opportunities for cooperative work and continual relationships, and greater participation of parents, teachers, and students (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). As organizations, schools are particularly reliant on a positive sense of community among families, teachers, and students for



successful functioning (Renzulli et al., 2011). Effective schools seem to operate under a more unified and consensual set of organizational goals, creating a social consensus about the academic mission of the school (Less et al., 1991). Collaboration among teachers has been found to influence teacher behavior and is associated with higher student performance and lower teacher turnover (Wei et al., 2014). Collaboration and distributed leadership are mutually reinforcing and work together to promote positive school environments (Wei et al., 2014). The amount of communication that teachers have with one another and with the principal has been shown to contribute positively to several teacher outcomes-the overall level of satisfaction, performance, and organizational efficacy; because of this collegial communication, a participant in such an organizational culture has access to both intrinsic and extrinsic sources of information about his or her performance (Less et al., 1991).

**Charter school.** Some charters rely heavily on inexperienced teachers because the salaries of new teachers are substantially lower than those of experienced instructors (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). While charter school teachers are required to be highly credentialed like traditional public school teachers, teachers in charter schools are much more likely to be new to the profession with fewer than ten years in teaching (California Department of Education, 2015; Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). Charter schools have higher rates of turnover among teachers, a circumstance that contributes to the comparative inexperience of their faculty (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001).

**Comparison of traditional and charter school's collaboration with colleagues.** When comparing collaboration with colleagues between traditional public schools and district charter schools it appears in the traditional setting there is awareness of the positive outcomes that result from collaborating with colleagues and it influences positive student learning. Although both

traditional public and district charter schools require teachers to be highly credentialed, when it comes to the charter setting, considering majority of charter teachers have less than 3-5 years of teaching experience and have little no experience working with high-poverty, high-risk, high-minority students, teachers in the district charter settings are the ones who need the most collaboration with colleagues, for example, with veteran teachers, to gain support and professional development.

#### **Working Condition-Subfactor #4: Professional Development, Variable #4**

**Traditional school.** Teaching is the only profession that requires all its practitioners to be highly credentialed no matter what their skill level, beginning or master (California Department of Education, 2015; Mihans, 2008). Low-achieving students often taught by least-qualified teachers (Boyd et al., 2011). The constant churning of teaching staff it is likely to make it more difficult to collaborate, develop standard norms of practice, and maintain progress towards common goals; this can lead to fragmented instructional programs and professional development plans that must be adapted each year to meet the need of teaching staff constant flux (Stuit & Smith, 2012).

**Charter school.** Since the publication of “A Nation at Risk” in 1983, improving teacher quality has been a high priority of school administrators and elected officials responsible for the performance of American schools (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). Teachers in charter schools are more likely to be new to the profession (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). About a third of charter school teachers have fewer than three years’ experience, which is twice the ratio in traditional public schools (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). Credentialed teachers who teach in charter schools typically have little to no teaching experience and have little to no experience working in high-poverty, high-risk, high-minority environments.

**Comparison of traditional and charter school's professional development.** When comparing professional development in the traditional public setting and district charter setting it appears in the traditional setting, just like in the collaboration with colleagues, comparison section, there is acknowledgement of the importance of staff development in order to maximize student achievement. In contrast, in the charter setting, professional development appears to be a priority considering majority of teachers who teach in a charter setting have less than 3-5 years total teaching experience, and have little to no experience working with students in high-poverty, high-risk, high-minority environments.

**Working Condition-Subfactor #5: Mentoring and Support, Variable #5**

**Traditional school.** Most reformers now agree that increasing teachers' expertise and effectiveness is critical to the success of ongoing efforts to reform our nation's schools (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Adequate support for instruction and classroom management is also a determinant of teacher retention (Wei et al., 2014). Schools in which teachers feel more efficacious are likely to be environments in which human relationships are supportive ("You can count on most staff members to help," "a great deal of cooperative effort," "a big family"), where teachers "share beliefs and values about...the central mission of the school," and where they "feel accepted and respected" (Less et al., 1991, p 15).

New teachers are more likely to teach at the same school and remain in the teaching profession compared to those who do not receive sufficient support (Wei et al., 2014). Principal's effects on school operations, through motivating teachers and students, identifying and articulating vision and goals, developing higher performance expectations, fostering communication, allocating resources, and developing organizational structure are essential to support instruction and learning (Lai, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). In some districts, being a mentor is

a full-time job, entailing release from classroom responsibilities for one or two years (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). In other districts mentors and novices are provided a limited amount of release time and substitute teachers so they can visit and observe in each other's classrooms (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

Without administrative support and assistance from colleagues, new teachers in tough inner-city schools get stuck in the survival/discovery stage (Shields, 2009). First year teachers need assistance with developing curriculum and pedagogy, but they also need psychological support to develop self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-confidence in their teaching skills as well as in their classroom management. When new teachers enter an urban school, they are commonly immersed in cultural differences and problems, are assigned the most difficult students that veteran teachers do not want to manage, are given the most demanding teaching loads, are assigned extra duties, are given minimal teaching resources, and receive little support (Shields, 2009). Initiating newcredentialed teachers in this manner causes them to leave (Shields, 2009). Among beginning credentialed teachers, most research suggest that one-third to one-half leave within their first 5 years (Ingersoll, 2001) due to the increase in responsibilities and demands placed upon them as well as lack of support financially and morally (Perrachione et al., 2008).

Urban schools not only offer larger class sizes and pupil loads, fewer materials, and less desirable teaching conditions, they also offer less professional autonomy and lower levels of teacher participation in decision making related to curriculum, texts, materials, or teaching policies (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). The importance of mentors to new credentialed teachers is now well documented in the research literature on induction and learning to teach (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). In a Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (1991) survey of teachers, when asked what would have helped them in their first years of teaching, 47%

indicated that a skilled, experienced teacher assigned to provide advice and assistance would have been most helpful; 39% responded that additional practical training beyond their preparation program, such as a year's internship before having their own classroom, would have been most helpful (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). The probability that mentoring programs will have positive effects depends on how they are designed (Hammond & Berry, 1999). Across the country, mentor programs vary in the amount of resources they provide for participating teacher; some are voluntary, with mentors and participants consulting on their own time; while others provide compensation to mentors in the form of additional pay and release time (Hammond & Berry, 1999). New credentialed teachers have reported very different needs for assistance regarding classroom procedures, planning lessons, teaching methods, and decisions about discipline; Based on these findings, Inner city schools with stretched resources, disproportionate numbers of inexperienced teachers, and commensurately fewer expert veterans are least likely to offer adequate mentoring supports (Hammond & Berry, 1999). Schools that implement induction programs report less teacher turnover, and induction programs cost districts less than recruiting and hiring new teachers (Shields, 2009).

**Charter school.** Teachers in charter schools are much more likely to be new to the profession with less than ten years' experience as a credentialed teacher (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). Some charters rely heavily on inexperienced teachers because the salaries of new teachers are substantially lower than those of experienced instructors (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). However, as a result, charter schools having higher rates of turnover among teachers which is a circumstance that contributes to the comparative inexperience of their faculty (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001). As a consequence, charter schools employ more teachers and aides relative to their numbers of students than do traditional public schools (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001).

**Comparison of traditional and charter school’s mentoring and support.** When comparing mentoring and support for traditional schools and charter schools it appears in the traditional setting, there is acknowledgement of the importance of an active school leader who is engaged with their staff and their development. It is also acknowledged in the traditional setting that teaching does not occur in an isolated box, especially, for credentialed teachers who are new to teaching in high-poverty, high-risk, high-minority environments. Again, when comparing the district charter setting to the traditional public school setting, there is a disparity in the amount of professional preparation of charter school teachers have, for example, having less than 3-5 years teaching experience.

**Working Conditions-Subfactor #6: Facilities, Variable #6**

**Traditional school.**

The California Department of Education provides a guide to help districts review certain health and safety requirements. The guide identifies potential physical hazards and environmental safety conditions, such as proximity to airports, transmission lines, railroads, underground pipelines, and propane tanks. (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 2)

“The California Department of Education envisions school facilities that enhance the achievement of all students and are learner-centered, safe, sustainable, and centers of the community” (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 1). “There is a growing body of research demonstrating that clean air, good light, and a small, quiet, comfortable, and safe learning environment are important for students’ academic achievement” (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 4). “Students who receive instruction in buildings with good environmental conditions can earn test scores that are 5-17% higher than scores for students in

substandard buildings” (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 2). “Students with better building conditions have up to 14 percent lower student suspension rates” (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 10). “Substandard physical environments are strongly associated with truancy and other behavior problems in students. Lower student attendance led to lower scores on standardized test in English-language arts and math” (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 7). “One study of the Los Angeles Unified School District showed that a school’s compliance with health and safety regulations can lead, on average, to a 36-point increase in California Academic Performance Index-scores” (California Department of Education, 2017, para.7).

The National Action Plan for Greening America’s Schools”concluded that a sustainable school creates a healthy environment that is conducive to learning and saves energy, resources, and money. A school site that uses effective construction techniques can reduce, reuse, and recycle between 50% and 75% of building materials (e.g. brick, asphalt, wood, plastic, glass, gypsum board, and carpet), thereby reducing environmental impacts. (California Department of Education, 2017, para. 3)

Large warehouse-type high schools in which teachers see 150 or more students daily, cycling anonymously through the classroom in fragmented 45-minutes periods, create alienation and anomie because they support neither learning nor teaching well(Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Among the aspects of working conditions that must be addressed is the facility itself and the availability of adequate supplies with which to teach (Mihans, 2008).

**Charter school.** While school districts are required to provide adequate and equivalent facilities to eligible charter schools under state law, districts vary in their compliance with this law. Many charter schools secure their own facilities, using public and private financing, or

donations. In some cases, the charter school may build a full school campus from the ground up; or, they may rent available space in churches, community centers or commercial buildings. Many charter schools choose to operate in a nontraditional facility because it may better serve the requirements of a unique program model (California Charter Schools Association, 2017; Vergari, 1999). Many charter schools are small schools and thus often have smaller classes make working conditions deeply satisfying for many teachers, yet, make substantial demands on teachers (Wells & Research Associates, 1998).

**Comparison of traditional and charter school's facilities.** When comparing facilities in both the traditional public and district charter school settings, it appears both settings see the same trend of a large number of students who rotate throughout the day. It appears charter schools are in facilities outside of traditional school houses, where school leaders either at the district level or at the charter board level, have to think of innovative spaces to house students and staff that are cost effective, yet, safe to foster a learning environment.

#### **Working Conditions-Subfactor #7: Resources, Variable #7**

**Traditional school.** Policies associated with state school funding, district resource allocations, and school-level tracking generally leave minority students with fewer and lower quality books, the least qualified and experienced teachers; and less access to high-quality curriculum (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Schools in wealthier communities typically receive substantially more funding to educate students than schools in poorer urban, that is, non-white and rural communities (Hursh & Martina, 2003). Poor and minority students typically are concentrated in the less well-funded schools, with most of their schools located in central cities and financed at levels substantially below those of neighboring suburban districts (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). When new teachers enter an urban school, they are commonly



immersed in cultural differences and problems, are assigned the most difficult students that veteran teachers do not want to manage, are given the most demanding teaching loads, are assigned extra duties, are given minimal teaching resources, and receive little support (Shields, 2009).

**Charter school.** Charter schools are publicly funded schools of choice given autonomy from state and local regulations in exchange for accountability for results (California Department of Education, 2015, para 3; Toma & Zimmer, 2011). “The Charter School Division of Education is responsible for approval, maintenance, and funding of charter schools” (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015, para. 7). When charter schools are funded, there is no loss of public school money because charter schools are public schools (California Charter Schools Association, 2017; Forman, 2010). Charter schools receive less per pupil funding even though the funding follows each student. Charter schools also rarely have access to local school bonds or parcel taxes that benefit traditional schools. Charter schools are also denied access to some large programs, such as Target Instructional Improvement Grants (TIIG) and Transportation (California Charter Schools Association, 2017; Forman, 2010; Wells & Research Associates, 1998).

All charter schools authorized by a school district pay an oversight fee to that school district, which provides for the cost of the district conducting school visits, fiscal and academic monitoring, renewal evaluation and other required forms of oversight. Charter schools pay between one and three percent of their revenue to the district to cover these oversight cost. (California Charter Schools Association, 2017, p. 17)

Some charter schools simply get by with less, but others, including some of the nation’s most well regarded, turn to private sources for money (Forman, 2010). What makes this reliance on

private fund raising particularly problematic is that different charter schools have dramatically different access to such resources (Wells & Research Associates, 1998).

The cost of high teacher turnover in a charter setting is even more expensive in both the short and long terms because it affects student learning and school culture. High teacher turnover is financially costly to charter schools because of additional time and resources needed to recruit and develop teachers with already limited resources. With limited resources, savvy charter school leaders rely on professional networks for support (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). The charisma, connectedness, and business knowledge of some charter leaders prove to be crucial because their networks enabled them to gain political support from district officials and tap into resources to aid in the success of their schools; many business savvy leaders are also able to use their knowledge of budgets and school finance to maximize both the school's existing resources and those they acquire (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). Using connections to get information, political support, and needed materials from those who have them often becomes the central means by which charter schools obtain what they need (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). Charter schools in wealthier areas are able to obtain more community-based resources, while charter schools in poor communities are often forced to rely on corporate and other external support; In several instances the need to generate funds increases the workload of an already-strapped staff because extra funding comes with extra demands that take charter school educators away from developing their vision of a true community based school; While this happens to some extent in all charter schools in regular public schools as well, the problem is exacerbated in the charter schools in poor communities that are struggling to remain fiscally viable (Wells & Research Associates, 1998).

**Comparison of traditional and charter school's resources.** When comparing resources in the traditional public and district charter school setting it appears both settings experience challenges providing adequate resources.

A historical and significant funding inequity between charter schools and traditional school districts has been clearly documented by the State Legislative Analyst, and Rand Research and others. The gap can exceed \$600 per pupil in base state operating funding. These inequities are often more significant than reported, because charter schools do not have equitable access to facilities or facilities funding, and often must pay for facilities out of their general operating funds.

In California, traditional district school and charter public schools are funded under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) which allocates state and local tax dollars to public education agencies based on the number of pupils in each grade level and students with special needs, for example, low-income pupils and English learners. Public funding generally follows the student to the public school the parents choose, whether a charter school or a traditional district school. (California Charter Schools Association, 2017, p. 14)

It appears that in both the traditional public and district charter settings that, if the school resides in an area of high minorities resources are limited, teachers are most likely to have the least experience, therefore, creates room for high turnover rates when teachers are not supported. However, it appears in the case of a district charter school leader, he/she has a little more autonomy to use their charisma, host of well-connected friends, and knowledge of business principles to support their vision of a successful school.

## **Working Condition-Subfactor #8: Student Behavior, Variable #8**

**Traditional school.** In numerous studies the microsystem of the classroom, the most influential factors on teachers' self-efficacy are (a) the types of students in the classroom and (b) the amount of control a teacher has in determining the classroom environment (Less et al., 1991). Although teachers overall held positive perceptions of their school environments, these perceptions tended to be less prevalent in schools with more minority and poor students than in schools with fewer such students (National Science Foundation, 2008). Poor and minority students typically are concentrated in the least well-funded schools, with most of their schools located in central cities and financed at levels substantially below those of neighboring suburban districts (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Policies associated with state school funding, district resource allocations, and school-level tracking generally leave minority students with fewer and lower quality books, qualified and less-experienced teachers; and less access to high-quality curriculum (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). With respect to the school setting in particular, there is evidence that teachers evaluate student behavior of racial groups different from their own more negatively than they do students of their own race (Renzulli et al., 2011). Schools with high proportions of black and Latino students experience particularly high rates of teacher dissatisfaction and turnover that can exacerbate preexisting problems with student achievement and discipline. Educating students in high-poverty, high-minority schools, where discipline problems and students with special needs are most numerous, will require smaller class size (Shields, 2009). When students experience negative home environments and poor school leadership, the need for small classes where the teacher can give more individual attention is intensified (Shields, 2009). Classroom discipline is the most difficult task for urban teachers and is the area in which they need the most training and assistance (Shields, 2009). As teachers'

accountability for student behavior increases, so do the expectations for teachers to implement research-based interventions (Shields, 2009). Student characteristics-fundamental to determining their efficacy and satisfaction is the expectations teachers hold for their students. If students are seen as having low ability or as being unable to learn, teachers tend to lower their expectations of their own ability to teach them. When dealing with uncooperative students, teachers, because of their lowered sense of efficacy, focus on discipline over instruction; Ashton and Webb (1996) as cited in Less et al. (1991) concluded that “teachers’ attributions lead to expectations that affect their sense of efficacy, which subsequently influences their behavior and student performance” (p. 15). Control over classroom discipline enables teachers to decide on the agenda and operation of the classroom, while the lack of control often makes them feel hindered and ineffective(Less et al., 1991). Principals at higher-performing schools spent more time on organizational management, day-to-day instruction, external relations, and other task. Principals at high-performing schools may have more time to spend on administrative task because they have fewer student behavior issues or because they are more efficient at completing administration task due to greater leadership experience (Lai et al., 2010). Studies of underprepared teachers-those who lack teacher education or who enter the field through short-term, alternative routes featuring only a few weeks of training consistently find that such teachers are less effective with students and that they have difficulty with curriculum development, classroom management, student motivation, and teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). They are also less likely to see it as their job to do so, often blaming the students if their teaching is not successful.

**Charter school.** California district charter schools are free to set admission requirements, for example, setting a criterion that could include a minimum grade point average to a minimum number of parental volunteer hours (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). About three-quarters

of the charter schools in California require parents to sign contracts stipulating what is expected of them and of their children (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). Although, California district charter school legislation states district charter schools should reflect the racial makeup of their school districts, there seems to be little monitoring of this aspect of the law (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). Schools subject to market conditions might seek to recruit students whose background characteristics make them the most likely to achieve high test scores at relatively low cost to the school (Forman, 2010). Through various mechanisms, for example, recruitment and enrollment requirements for children and parents, charter schools have more power than most public schools to shape their educational communities (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). As publicly funded schools of choice, charters are said to provide greater educational access to disadvantaged groups that have traditionally had the fewest choices in education (Wells & Research Associates, 1998). “District charter school advocates note the inequitable features of the traditional public system and suggest that district charter schools enhance equity by offering new options for low-income families formerly restricted to the local traditional public school” (Vergari, 1999, p. 120). However, district charter schools not in high-risk, high-poverty, high-minority areas have a little more involvement in student selection often cited as cream skimming. Cream-skimming is often associated with charter schools because the process for enrolling students is more site based where a central administrative office is not involved.

**Comparison of traditional and charter school’s student behavior.** When comparing student behavior between the traditional public school setting and district charter settings it appears when there is a high number of minority students in both settings, both settings have challenges with discipline. However, charter schools have more flexibility on student selection and enrollment versus traditional public schools.

## Summary

Education in the United States has seen a transformation over time as the demand for skilled workers has increased. Public education has been the focal point of child development for years, yet, recently, new teaching environments have been created to meet the needs of students, parents, and educators, and global and national needs for skilled workers. While the traditional public school has not been able to meet the demands of diverse student and staff populations, alternative school settings have been created, for example, district charter schools, to meet the needs of students who traditionally were not supported in the traditional public setting.

Although, some traditional secondary public school still are not meeting the needs of the nation's diverse youth, secondary district charter schools are on the rise to fill gaps that traditional secondary public schools cannot fill. Based on organizational research on schools, there are four factors that contribute to teacher retention and satisfaction (a) working conditions, (b) instruction, (c) teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy and (d) teacher evaluation (Wei et al., 2014). Of the four areas, this study focuses more aggressively on *working conditions* which outlines eight sub-factors that contribute to a satisfactory supportive environment which are (a) school leadership, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) collaboration with colleagues, (d) professional development, (e) mentoring/support, facilities, (g) resources, and (h) student behavior (Wei et al., 2014). Based on these eight factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction, traditional public and district charter school teachers share similar experiences, for example, managing scarce resources, and student behavior. Traditional public and district charter school teachers also share differences, for example, traditional public school leaders having more formal training, whereas, district charter school leaders rely mostly on charisma, well connected networks, and knowledge of business principles. The commonalities and differences produce a range of work experiences.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to investigate the work conditions and professional beliefs of eight Southern California secondary (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school teachers who have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience to learn more about what constitutes ideal working conditions for secondary teachers. More specifically, this study via semi-structured interviews, invited participants to (a) describe the working conditions they experienced in a traditional setting, (b) describe the working conditions they experienced in a charter setting, (c) compare the traditional and charter school working conditions that they experienced, and (d) describe what they believe to be the idea school working conditions for secondary teachers?

With regards to eight southern California secondary classroom teachers who have a minimum of two years' experience in the same content area or grade level and who have equitable teaching experience in both traditional public school and district charter school setting with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience, the following four questions guided the study's research:

1. What were teachers' working conditions in a district traditional secondary school?
2. What were teachers' working conditions in a district charter school environment?
3. What comparisons can be made from secondary teachers' district traditional school and district charter school working condition experiences?
4. What do teachers believe to be the ideal secondary school working conditions to promote teacher retention, teacher satisfaction, and support quality teacher performance?



## **Research Methodology and Rationale**

This study utilized a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach to engage eight Southern California credentialed secondary teachers in individual semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences and insights related to working conditions in charter and non-charter school settings. “Qualitative research involves looking at characteristics, or qualities, that cannot be entirely reduced to numerical values. A qualitative researcher typically aims to examine the many nuances and complexities of a particular phenomenon” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 95). This study supports a qualitative research approach because it is based on the belief that there are multiple possible realities constructed by different individuals in relation to this area of research focus and the research questions are exploratory and interpretive in nature (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

A phenomenological methodology was selected for this study. Phenomenological research is “research toward lived experiences (phenomenology) and interpreting the texts of life [hermeneutics]” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). “Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2013, p.76). Throughout the phenomenological study, the researcher captured two things (a) detailed testimony as to their previous and current teaching environments, and (b) detailed testimony as to what lends to ideal satisfactory teaching environments.

The advantages to using a hermeneutic phenomenological model for this study was that through extensive interviewing: (a) people being interviewed had experienced the phenomena in question; (b) understanding was made of elusive concepts through analysis; (c) other forms of

data could be used for validation purposes, for example, observations, journals, poetry, and music, which will later assist during triangulation; and (d) if necessary, it allows the researcher to follow up with an additional interview if necessary (Creswell, 2013).

### **Research Design Credibility/Trustworthiness**

The following strategies were utilized to ensure the credibility/trustworthiness of the study design (a) the use of established research methods, (b) included multiple participants with diverse backgrounds, (c) used tactics to encourage participant honesty, (d) member checks (participant verification of transcripts and external coders), and (e) examined previous research findings (Creswell, 2013).

### **Setting**

The researcher conducted research in the state of California. California's coastline spans a total of 840 miles and is broken into four regions- the mountains, coast, desert, and central valley. California has a population of 38.8 million people (United States Census Bureau, 2016). To accommodate California's large population there are a number of school types to meet needs of California's diverse K-12 population. During the 2015-2016 school year there were a total of 1,025 traditional public school districts with an enrollment of 6,226,737 and a total of 1,222 district charter schools with an enrollment of 572,752 in California with a total of 295,025 teachers in California (California Department of Education, 2016b). For the purposes of this study the researcher conducted research in Southern California which consisted of 235 traditional districts and 356 district charters (California Department of Education, 2016c).

### **Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures**

For the purposes of this study, the researcher targeted Southern California credentialed secondary teachers had at least two years' experience in a district charter school and two years

teaching experience in a traditional public school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience. The researcher had a non-random purposive sample size of eight participants. The researcher used a non-random snowball sampling procedure by which the researcher recruited a few participants who met study inclusion criteria who then also identified other teachers who might be good participants. The researcher conducted and audio-recorded the semi-structured interviews with participants in a face-to-face setting. One hour was scheduled for each interview where participants were asked five semi-structured questions. Interview questions were shared with participants in advance of the interview to give them time to ponder responses (see Appendix B). At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher asked if participants knew of additional teachers who fit the criteria for the study. If participants were unavailable to interview face-to-face, participants were given the opportunity to interview electronically as an alternative, for example, via Skype or Google Hangout.

### **Human Subject Considerations**

Permission to conduct this study was sought and obtained from Pepperdine University's Graduate Professional Schools Institutional Review Board [IRB] (see Appendix C). As an IRB requirement, the researcher completed an online training for human subject research (see Appendix D). Using a recruitment script template, provided by the university, the researcher e-mailed potential participants to elicit interest to participate in the study (see Appendix E). Upon successful recruitment of the participants, the researcher e-mailed participants a consent form prior to the interview date (see Appendix F). The consent form provided an overview of the purpose of the study, potential risks, benefits of the study, described how data will be used, and requested that the interview was audio recorded (see Appendix F). In addition to the consent form, participants were e-mailed the participant's interview guide that included the five semi-

structured interview questions that were discussed during the interview (see Appendix B). Providing the interview guide in advance assisted participants with preparation for the interview (see Appendix B). To maintain confidentiality, participants were given the informed consent forms, but were not asked to sign them (see Appendix F). Pseudonyms were used to protect the real identities of the participants. Audio recordings and transcripts were kept separate from the master list of participant identities and pseudonyms and study data will be properly deleted a minimum of three years upon completion of this study. Several steps were taken by the researcher to minimize the potential risk to participants. As previously stated, identities of participants were protected through the use of pseudonyms. The researcher maintained two separate lists (a) a list of pseudonyms and (b) a master list of pseudonyms and actual names. All data were kept confidential and access to raw data was limited to the researcher and dissertation chair. Data were stored on a password protected personal computer in the researcher's home office. In the event that a negative issue occurred, the researcher would submit an adverse event form to the GPS IRB. Upon completion of the study, participants will now have access to a digital copy that will be stored on ProQuest, a public database of dissertations.

Due to the voluntary and confidential nature of this study, there were minimal risks involved in participating, for example, some participants may have rekindled past and or current work experiences or the loss of personal time for the length of the interview session. In attempt to limit any risk during the interview, the researcher reminded participants that they could cause, stop, skip a question(s), and or discontinue the interview at anytime. The researcher reminded participants per the consent form, they could also follow up with the researcher, the dissertation chair, or the IRB chairperson should they have any questions or concerns after the interview (see Appendix F). The benefits of this study were likely to exceed the minimal risks.

There were no direct benefits to study participants. However, this study may be of importance to California education policy makers, county offices of education administrators, school district administrators, secondary school site administrators and secondary classroom teachers. Learning more about working conditions for Southern California secondary teachers in district traditional and charter settings might provide new information about secondary classroom teacher realities and challenges and how realities and challenges influence teacher satisfaction, retention, and teacher quality (Boyd et al., 2011; Dolton & Van der Klaauw, 1999; Garcia, 1986; Santoro, 2011).

### **Instrumentation**

**Semi-structured interview.** The instrument used for this study was face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.b) defined semi-structured interviews as interviews that evolve from inquiry composed of a mix of both structured and unstructured questions. The researcher constructed and asked semi-structured questions that sought to gain an understanding of past, current, and ideal secondary teacher work experiences. Implementing this particular instrument allowed the researcher to audio record and write additional anecdotal notes during the interview and develop follow-up questions if necessary (Creswell, 2013).

**Content validity.** The researcher gained validity through two methods: (a) literature relevant to secondary work conditions and (b) through expert review. Table 1 depicts a summary of the literature review sources supporting each of interview questions and also shows the alignment of the interview questions with the guiding research questions.

Table 1

*Literature Sources for Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Literature Sources
R1: What were teachers' working conditions in a secondary traditional school?	1) Tell me about your experience working in a secondary traditional school.	(Boyd et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Shields, 2009; Wei et al., 2014)
R2: What were teachers' working conditions in a secondary charter school?	2) Tell me about your experience working in a secondary charter school.	(Boyd et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Forman, 2010; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Podgursky & Ballou, 2001; Shields, 2009; Toma & Zimmer, 2011; Vergari, 1999; Wei et al., 2014; Wells & Associates, 1998; Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997)
R3: What comparisons can be made from secondary traditional and secondary charter school teachers' working condition experiences?	3) How did the working conditions you experienced in the charter and traditional school setting compare?	(Boyd et al., 2011; Lai et al., 2010; National Science Foundation, 2008; Renzulli et al., 2011; Shields, 2009; Stuit & Smith, 2012; Wei et al., 2014)
R4: What do teachers believe to be the ideal secondary traditional and secondary charter school working conditions to promote teacher retention, teacher satisfaction, and support quality teacher performance?	4) What would be your ideal secondary traditional school environment? 5) What would be your ideal secondary charter school environment?	(Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Lai et al., 2010; Less et al., 1991; Mihans, 2008); Renzulli et al., 2011; Santoro, 2011; Wei et al., 2014; Wells & Research Associates, 1998; Wood, 2005; Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997)

Expert review involved two professional educators with knowledge of the professional literature related to working conditions in secondary schools and who have knowledge and

experience related to public traditional and charter secondary school settings. These individuals reviewed the instrument for soundness by looking at the content of the questions, the wording of the questions, the organization of the instrument, and the overall interview procedures.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

After IRB approval, the following procedures were followed while conducting this study:

- Compiled a list of Southern California traditional public and district charter schools.
- Identified teachers via researcher's professional network who had at least two years of experience in both a traditional public and district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience.
- Recruited potential participants to participate in the study via an e-mail invitation (see Appendix E). Included informed consent with email communication (see Appendix F).
- Scheduled face-to-face or virtual interviews with participants who expressed willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix G).
- Sent an interview guide with the five semi-structured questions to participants in advance of scheduled interview (see Appendix B).
- Re-confirmed interview day, time, location and format via email with participants one day prior to the interview (see Appendix G).
- Implemented interview script (see Appendix B).
- Audio recorded one hour interviews.
- Recorded anecdotal notes.

- Transcribed interview sessions, made edits, and stored on Google drive.
- Sent interview transcripts to participants to check for accuracy and thoroughness and invited them to respond with any edits within a week.
- Used Hyper-Research to electronically analyze transcripts for frequent codes previously identified (see Appendix H).
- Sent interview transcripts to an external coder to manually highlight significant themes related to study's eight variables (see Appendix H).
- Analyzed significant highlights from external coder for later conceptualization.
- Wrote an account of participants' experiences in Chapter Four of this study.

### **Data Management**

The researcher took thorough steps to ensure data was securely stored for the participants' protection. First, participants were provided an informed consent form for their records, but were not asked to sign it (see Appendix F). Second, pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names. The researcher kept a master list of participants' real names and pseudonyms. The master list was kept separate from the data to protect participants' identities. Third, the audio-recording, list of pseudonyms, and observation log were kept on the researcher's personal password protected computer. Hard copies of data were stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's office. Fourth, raw data collected was limited to the researcher and the dissertation chair. Finally, data collected in this study will be destroyed no sooner than three years following the completion of the study.

### **Data Analysis and Reporting**

In qualitative research, data collection is done in a natural setting, sensitive to the people and places under analysis, to establish patterns or themes (Creswell, 2013). To assist in the



researcher's qualitative analysis, a code book was created to serve as a skeleton of significant themes and codes that included words, phrases, or even emotions. The code book was a close derivative of key themes that could have included words, phrases, and or emotions from the study's eight variables under working conditionsschool leadership, teacher empowerment, collaboration with colleagues, professional development, mentoring and support, facilities, resources, and student behavior(see Appendix A and Appendix E; Wei et al., 2014). Second, an external transcriber was used to produce audio recorded data into hard copy transcripts. As part of the researcher's data management plan, pseudo names that were created prior to audio-recorded interviews continue to be used during external transcriptions to protect the researcher's qualitative data and human subjects (Creswell, 2013). Third, transcribed data were analyzed by *Hyper-Research* that tagged pre-identified and uploaded codes related to the study's variables. Fourth, an external coder was used to assist the researcher in manually highlighting significant codes closely derived from the study's eight variables school leadership, teacher empowerment, collaboration with colleagues, professional development, mentoring and support, facilities, resources, and student behavior (see Appendix A and Appendix E; Wei et al., 2014).

“The core idea of coding is that the texts containing the raw data are *indexed*. Codes-keywords, phrases, mnemonics, or numbers-that signal the occurrence of specific information are assigned to segments of the text” (Glaser & Laudel, 2013, p. 10). The function of codes is to indicate what is talked about in a segment of text. Codes thus support the retrieval of text segments, which in turn can be used to group them according to thematic aspects of the data they contain (Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Laudel, 2013). The external coder for this study had prior experience coding similar qualitative research projects where they also served to check transcripts for mistakes and check for duplicate or closely related codes. Lastly, the researcher

checked for accuracy of their findings by employing a combination of multiple validity strategies: prolonged time in the field, used peer debriefing, and lastly, used an external auditor to thoroughly analyze how structures in an organization, in this case, secondary schools, influence experiences of people in the workplace (Creswell, 2013; Wei et al., 2014).

## **Summary**

This study utilized a qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological research design for the purpose of exploring, describing, and comparing public traditional and district charter school working conditions of California Credentialed secondary teachers via shared lived experiences. A non-random purposive sample of eight study participants was identified using a snowball sampling procedure. Participants included in the sample were credentialed and had five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience with a minimum of two years' experience in both a public traditional setting and a charter school setting. Human subject considerations included gaining permission to conduct the study through Pepperdine University's IRB board and fulfilling online researcher training. Once approved, recruitment took place where interested participants were scheduled for an interview. Questions for the interview were given to participants before the actual interview. To protect participants' identities, pseudonym names were used instead of participants' real names. Participants were notified prior to interviewing that they could pause, skip a question(s), and or discontinue the interview at any time. In-depth interviews were used as the strategy for data collection. Interviews consisted of five semi-structured questions and were conducted either in person or in virtual setting. Content validity of interview questions was established as the result of literature review and expert review. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber. Electronic data were stored on a password protected computer at the researcher's office. Hard copies of data

were stored and locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office. A code book of literature-based ideas/themes was developed and uploaded to Hyper Research for electronic data analysis. Data analysis was reviewed by experienced qualitative coders (member checking). Lastly, data from the study will be destroyed appropriately no sooner than three years upon completion of the study.

## **Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of Data**

This chapter presents findings from an analysis of the study's qualitative data.

Detailed findings are organized and presented according to the study's guiding research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings related to traditional public and district charter school teacher working conditions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to investigate the work conditions and professional beliefs of eight Southern California secondary (grades 6th-12th) school teachers who have at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience with two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school to learn more about what constitutes ideal working conditions for secondary teachers. Via semi-structured interviews, participants were invited to investigate the following areas: (a) describe the working conditions they experienced in a traditional setting, (b) describe the working conditions they experienced in a charter setting, (c) compare the traditional and charter school working conditions that they experienced, and (d) describe what they believe to be the ideal school working conditions for secondary teachers.

### **Research Questions**

With regards to eight Southern California secondary classroom teachers who have at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience with two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school, the following four questions were investigated:

1. What were teachers' working conditions in a district traditional secondary school?
2. What were teachers' working conditions in a district charter school environment?

3. What comparisons can be made from secondary teachers' district traditional school and district charter school working condition experiences?
4. What do teachers believe to be the ideal secondary school working conditions to promote teacher retention, teacher satisfaction, and support quality teacher performance?

## **Methodology**

The researcher utilized a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach to engage eight Southern California credentialed secondary teachers in individual semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences and insights related to working conditions in secondary traditional public and secondary district charter school settings. In-depth interviews were utilized for data collection. Interviews consisted of five semi-structured questions. Four participants interviewed face-to-face and four participants interviewed via a virtual setting. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber.

## **Findings**

Interviews were analyzed under the scope of the study's original eight sub-categories under working conditions which are: (a) school leadership, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) collaboration with colleagues, (d) professional development, (e) mentoring/support, (f) facilities, (g) resources, and (h) student behavior (Wei et al., 2014; see Appendix A). After eight interviews were conducted, each was electronically outsourced for transcription and coded three times, once manually by an experienced coder, a second time via a software program- *HyperResearch*, and lastly by the researcher.

**Research question 1.** The first research question sought to discover teachers’ working conditions in a public traditional secondary school. Interview question one was aligned with research question one.

**Interview question 1.** The first interview question invited participants to share their experience related to working conditions in public traditional secondary school. Four themes emerged from analysis of the interview responses. Table 2 depicts the four themes and related frequency of responses.

Table 2

*Key Themes for Teacher Working Conditions in Public Traditional Secondary Schools*

Key Themes	Frequency of Responses
Autonomy	8
Fewer Obligations/Less Pressure	6
Union Protection	3
Lacking Norms	3

*Note:* Frequent conceptual model variables: (a) teacher empowerment, (b) school leadership autonomy was the most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the traditional setting.

Eight participants mentioned how there are more freedoms, liberties, and flexibility to being a teacher in traditional secondary schools. Participant 002 described her experience as, “Well, in the public school there was a lot more autonomy. A lot more like I said free range. A lot more trust of your abilities as a professional. That felt good” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Fewer obligations and feeling less pressure was the second

most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the traditional setting. Six participants mentioned how overall they did not have extra tasks outside of required teaching duties. Participant 006 describes their experience as:

Most things are optional even though all of the staff will come to them. I feel like, because they don't ask us to do as much, they don't ask us to submit as much, they don't ask us much in general, that gives me more time and more freedom to really make my lessons better. (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

A sense of protection and lacking norms were both the third and fourth most frequently mentioned themes in relation to working conditions in a traditional setting. Three participants mentioned how in the traditional public setting they felt safe knowing there was a union in Participant 003 described their experience as, "I'm in a union here, so there's a lot of things that our administrators never ask us to do. For example, they've never asked us to do anything during lunch, which I really appreciate" (Participant 003, personal communication, March 12, 2017). Three participants also mentioned how from their experience the traditional setting lacks norms, for example, routines and clear expectations, stating how daily behaviors and reminders influenced their work experience.

**Research question 2.** The second research question sought to discover what were teachers' working conditions in a secondary charter school. To engage in this investigation the researcher asked one interview question to reveal experiences working conditions in a secondary district charter school.

**Interview question 2.** The second interview question invited participants to share their experience related to working conditions in a secondary district charter school. Four themes

emerged from analysis of the interview responses. Table 3 depicts the four themes and related frequency of responses.

Extra duties was the most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the district charter setting. Extra duties in a district charter setting according to four participants varied from filing papers, being asked to complete task during lunch time, having class bulletin boards a particular way, or new forms to fill out. Participant 005 describes her experience as:

The amount of tasks that we were asked to complete sometimes were more than could reasonably be done in the amount of time that we were being given to do them. So the working conditions at times were very difficult, again not in terms of illegal or not in terms of mistreatment necessarily, but just because the time constraints based on what we were asked to do, were sometimes kind of ridiculous.(Participant 005, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Table 3

*Key Themes for Teacher Working Condition in Secondary District Charter Schools*

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Key Themes	Frequency of Responses
Extra Duties	7
Collaboration/Relationships With Colleagues	7
Pressure/Stress	5
Lack of Autonomy	4

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*Note:* Frequent conceptual model variables: (a) collaboration with colleagues, (b) mentoring/support, (c) teacher empowerment, (d) professional development, (e) school leadership



Collaboration and relationships with colleagues were the second most frequently mentioned themes in relation to working conditions in the district charter setting. Five participants mentioned how the size of a district charter school naturally sets staff members up for close proximity and close relationship building. In addition to natural relationship building, school leadership had a significant role in providing consistent opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and professional development which enhances relationship building among staff members. Participant 001 described his experience as:

I did make some of the closest friends I've ever made and in terms of professionally, my relationships at XXX with my colleagues were the tightest I've ever had and I've remained very close to most of the people there. As a matter of fact, when I first left XXX for about a month after that I had dreams every night about my colleagues at XXX and I ended up missing those colleagues like I've never misses any of my colleagues before. (Participant 001, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant 008 mentioned how this type of collaboration and support with colleagues is helpful for new teachers entering the field who still need support with pedagogy. Participant 004 described her supportive district charter experience as:

I became a much, much more thorough teacher. I became a much more responsible teacher and a much more knowledgeable teacher. It just made me a better teacher and there just wasn't that kind of training, not even in my credential program. It seemed to really ... my experience at XXX really, really filled in a lot of the gaps that I was missing previous round as a teacher. (Participant 004, personal communication, March 12, 2017)

Pressure and stress was the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in a district charter setting. Five participants mentioned how as a result of the lack of

autonomy in a district charter setting no matter how much work they did as a teacher or in completing extra duties it was not enough for district charter administrators. With extra pressures, one participant mentioned, how it made teachers do unethical things and Participant 005 mentioned those same stressors caused her and other teachers to teach in unnatural ways.

Lack of autonomy and feelings of pressure and stress was described by Participant 007 as:

It always felt like no matter how great a job you were doing, it was management or administrators who oftentimes dealt with the staff as if it was never enough. It was, nothing's ever enough and everyone's job is at stake. So you certainly felt the need to do whatever you could to protect your job. So there was a lot of negative pressure. Whether that meant working extremely long hours, 12 and 13 hours to try to get the job done that'd never get done anyway. Whether it meant stressing yourself, stressing the kids, for test scores. That was always a very negative pressure. (Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Lack of autonomy was the fourth most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in a district charter setting. Four participants mentioned how in a district charter setting teachers are not trusted to make professional decisions, which for them resulted in unnecessary helicoptering and constant check-ins which made it difficult to continue professionally.

**Research question 3.** The third research question sought to discover what comparisons could be made from secondary traditional and secondary charter school teachers' working condition experiences. To engage in this investigation the researcher asked one interview question to reveal comparisons between both a secondary traditional and district charter school.

**Interview question 3.** The third interview question invited participants to share their comparative work experience in both a traditional public and district charter schools. Three themes emerged from analysis of the interview responses. Table 4 depicts the three themes and related frequency of responses.

Table 4

*Key Themes for Teachers’ Comparable Working Conditions in Secondary Public Traditional and Secondary District Charter Schools*

Key Themes	Frequency of Responses
Facilities	8
Resources/Supplies/Materials	3
Less Pressure/Less Stress	3

*Note:* Frequent conceptual model variables: (a) facilities, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) resources

Facilities was the first most frequently mentioned theme related to how working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional school settings compared. All eight participants gave reference to school facilities in both settings. In addition, all eight participants gave reference to the conditions of secondary district charter school facilities. Participant 002 described her experience with school size and space in the district charter setting as:

At the charter school that I worked at it was older. The buildings were older so some stuff was a little bit run down, as far as the building was. They were just older buildings.

Buildings that probably needed to be repaired, renovated, stuff like that. The classrooms

were smaller. There was a little bit more wear and tear on the buildings as opposed to the traditional format schools. (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Resources, supplies, and materials were the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to how working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional school settings compared. Three participants gave mention that both the traditional public and district charter setting both have supplies for instruction, while one went on to further explain from their experience in a district charter setting human resources were also scarce. Participant 004 stated how from her experience working in two charter schools she always had plenty of math resources even before having an actual classroom to teach in.

Less pressure and less stress was the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation to how working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional school settings compared. Three participants mentioned how there are fewer demands at the traditional public setting. Participant 006 described her experience as, “It was definitely less stressful in traditional. Things were a lot more lackadaisical, but in a charter, because they were smaller they demanded more of you and you did it” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017).

**Research question 4.** The fourth research question sought to discover what do teachers believe to be the ideal secondary traditional and secondary district charter school working conditions to promote teacher retention, teacher satisfaction, and support quality teacher performance. To engage in this investigation the researcher asked two interview questions to reveal ideal secondary traditional and secondary district charter school working conditions.

**Interview question 4.** The fourth interview question invited participants to share what would be their ideal secondary traditional school environment. Four themes emerged from

analysis of the interview responses. Table 5 depicts the four themes and related frequency of responses.

Table 5

*Key Themes for Teachers' Ideal Secondary Public Traditional School Environment*

Key Themes	Frequency of Responses
Support From Administration	6
Smaller School/Class Size	6
Collaboration/Cooperative Staff	4
Instructional Supplies	4

*Note:* Frequent conceptual model variables: (a) collaboration with colleagues, (b) professional development, (c) mentoring and support, (d) resources, (e) school leadership, (f) facilities

Support from administration and smaller school and class size were both the most frequently mentioned themes in relation to an ideal traditional public setting. Six participants stated how in their ideal environment there would be more engagement between administrators and staff. Of the six participants who mentioned having support from administrators in a traditional public setting, three of those same participants, made a connection to how when they taught at large traditional public schools, support was minimal because of other administrative responsibilities. Participant 003 describes his ideal traditional public setting as:

Where the classes aren't too big but you don't want them too small either. You can have a good class size. I feel like 20 kids would be a perfect class size for me. To be able to do that and get to know everybody in the school and the community, it makes you feel like you're working with the whole school. At times it feels like the people that you work

with, since we're such a big school there is probably more than a hundred teachers there, in the whole school. You feel like you kind of just know the 10-15 teachers you work with. You know that you get to know them because you're working with them, but then there are all these other teachers really don't know anything about. (Participant 003, personal communication, March 12, 2017)

Collaboration and cooperative staff and instructional supplies were both the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal traditional public setting. Four participants articulated how in their ideal traditional public setting there would be more opportunities to collaborate with other teachers on best practices. Participant 004 described her ideal traditional setting as, "Collaboration occurs twice a month. It can't just be 'we need this form filled out,' and nothing happens with it" (Participant 004, personal communication, March 12, 2017). Of the four participants, Participants 004 and 005 shared similar ideal traditional setting environments by stating how staff members must have or want to have the mentality of working for the betterment of students.

Four participants mentioned an ideal traditional environment being one where there are readily available resources for instruction, for example, technology, curriculum, and materials for hands on learning experiences. Participant 008 describes her ideal traditional public setting as:

A school that is equipped to serve the needs of the students, having the majority of the resources they would need to address the student needs and whether that is human resources or whether it's physical resources, books, curriculum, materials for hands-on experiences. (Participant 008, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

**Interview question 5.** The fifth interview question invited participants to investigate what would be their ideal secondary charter school environment. Six themes emerged from analysis of the interview responses. Table 6 depicts the six themes and related frequency of responses.

Table 6

*Key Themes for Teachers' Ideal District Charter School Environment*

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Key Themes	Frequency of Responses
Treated as a Professional	8
Student Access to Extra Curricular Activities	5
Readily Available Resources	4
Work/Life Balance	4

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*Note:* Frequent conceptual model variables: (a) teacher empowerment, (b) facilities, (c) school leadership, (e) resources

Being treated as a professional was the first most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter environment. All eight participants gave mention to how their ideal secondary district charter setting would be one where teachers are trusted that the decisions they make in the classroom are to support students. Participant 006 describes her ideal secondary district charter as:

I think being treated like a professional and being allowed to do your job well and to the best of your ability and being trusted as a professional to do that, however the content is delivered and however the relationship with the kids play out, I think being treated like a professional and being trusted to do your job is really important. (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Student access to extra-curricular activities was the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter setting. Five participants mentioned how in their ideal secondary district charter environment there would be a variety of opportunities for students to be involved in outside of academics. Participant 003 describes his ideal secondary district charter school environment as, “one that has the arts, music, athletics...things that would help different parts of the child shine” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017).

Readily available resources and having work and life balance were the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter setting. Four participants mentioned how in their ideal district charter environment there are financial resources in place for sustainability. Of the same four participants, Participant 004 mentioned charters should have readily available technology for staff and students.

Work and life balance was a theme that manifested several times among participants. Four participants articulated how in a secondary district charter it would be ideal to have a balance between the responsibilities expected of a district charter teacher and maintaining a quality of life. Participant 003 described his ideal secondary district charter environment as, “One that is sustainable and provides a more equitable work and life balance and especially have time for my children”(Participant 003, personal communication, March 12, 2017).

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the detailed findings for the four research questions that guided this study. Following is a summary of the key themes that resulted from the data analysis.

**Research question 1.** The key themes that resulted from data analysis for Research Question 1 included autonomy, fewer obligations/less pressure, more union protection, and



lacking norms. All eight participants mentioned how in a traditional public setting there is more freedom to make decisions as a teacher. The second theme to arise from data analysis for Research Question 1 was fewer obligations/ less pressure. Six participants mentioned how as a result of having more freedoms to make decisions as a teacher, they had less obligations outside of teaching and felt less pressure. Two themes arose with the same frequency which were union protection and lacking norms. Three participants mentioned how their experience in a traditional public setting there are security measures to protect teachers as professionals. Three participants also mentioned how in the traditional public setting, from their experience there are were less professional routines and expectations in place.

**Research question 2.** The key themes that resulted from data analysis for Research Question 2 included extra duties, collaboration/relationships with colleagues, pressure/stress, and lack of autonomy. Seven participants mentioned how in a district charter school there are additional responsibilities for teachers to do outside of teaching. Seven participants mentioned how in a district charter setting there is a lot of exposure to collaboration and as a result strong relationships are created. Five participants mentioned how in a district charter setting there are frequent and varying levels of pressure and stress in the district charter setting. Four participants gave mention to the lack of flexibility as a teacher in a district charter.

**Research question 3.** The key themes that resulted from data analysis for research question related to comparative work conditions in a traditional public and district charter included facilities, resources and supplies, and less pressure/stress. Eight participants articulated how when comparing work experiences from both a traditional public and district charter setting school size and space was a significant factor in their experience. Resources and supplies and less pressure and stress were both equally mentioned by three participants.

**Research question 4.** The key themes that resulted from data analysis for research question related to an ideal traditional public setting included support from administration, smaller school size and class size, collaboration and cooperative staff, instructional supplies. The key themes that resulted from data analysis for the research question related to an ideal district charter setting included being treated as a professional, student access to extra-curricular activities, readily available resources, and a work/life balance were themes specifically related to an ideal district charter setting. In regards to an ideal traditional public setting, two themes shared the same frequency which was support from administration and smaller school and class size. Six participants mentioned support from administration making a difference in professional development. Six participants also mentioned a smaller school with smaller class sizes being their ideal traditional public setting. Lastly, collaboration and having cooperative staff and instructional supplies were two themes that shared the same frequency. Four participants articulated how their ideal traditional public setting would infuse more collaboration with staff buy-in. Four participants also mentioned how in their ideal traditional public setting instructional supplies would be readily available. In regards to an ideal district charter school being treated as a professional was the most frequent theme. Eight participants mentioned how as teachers they would like to feel they are trusted as trained practitioners to make decisions related to student learning. Five participants mentioned how in their ideal district charter there would be activities for students to be involved in from sports, clubs, and the arts. Lastly, readily available resources and a work and life balance were two themes that shared the same frequency under an ideal district charter setting. Four participants mentioned having resources available for an already resource stricken environment would be their ideal district charter setting. Lastly, four participants also mentioned having a balance between work and personal life.

## **Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions**

This chapter discusses key findings from the study, conclusions, recommendations for policy and practice, and recommendations for further study.

### **The Problem**

Having talented and well prepared teachers are keys for student success because the skills and training learned in the classroom are essentially facilitated through the guidance and instruction of a trained and credentialed teacher (Garcia, 1986). Teacher quality is a factor when determining if students are academically prepared and performing at proficient levels. The organization of schools affects the lives of all members-students, teachers, and administrators (Less et al., 1991). The working conditions of a teacher are important when determining how effective a teacher will be (Stuit & Smith, 2012). Effective schools cultivate shared beliefs among teachers regarding instructional goals and practices (Stuit & Smith, 2012). There is value to having satisfied teachers in Southern California traditional secondary and charter secondary schools because one of the main challenges is retaining qualified teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008). While continuing to make this state home to many, educating its diverse community will continue to be a challenge and area of growth.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to investigate the work conditions and professional beliefs of eight to ten Southern California secondary (grades 6th-12th) school teachers who have at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience with two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school to learn more about what constitutes ideal working conditions for secondary teachers. Via semi-structured interviews, participants were invited to investigate

the following areas: (a) describe the working conditions they experienced in a traditional setting, (b) describe the working conditions they experienced in a charter setting, (c) compare the traditional and charter school working conditions that they experienced, and (d) describe what they believe to be the idea school working conditions for secondary teachers?

### **Research Questions**

With regards to eight Southern California secondary classroom teachers who have at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience with two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school, the following four questions were investigated:

1. What were teachers' working conditions in a district traditional secondary school?
2. What were teachers' working conditions in a district charter school environment?
3. What comparisons can be made from secondary teachers' district traditional school and district charter school working condition experiences?
4. What do teachers believe to be the ideal secondary school working conditions to promote teacher retention, teacher satisfaction, and support quality teacher performance?

### **Methodology**

The researcher utilized a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach to engage eight Southern California credentialed secondary teachers in individual semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences and insights related to working conditions in a secondary, traditional public and secondary, district charter school settings. Four participants participated via in person interviews and the remaining four participated via Google Hangout. Interview

questions were aligned with the researcher's research questions to support data related to a single environment or comparative to another environment.

## **Discussion of Findings**

**Research question 1.** The first research question sought to discover teachers' working conditions in a public traditional secondary school interview question one was aligned with this guiding research question. Four key themes emerged from the analysis of participant responses to interview question one, autonomy, fewer obligations and less pressure, more union protection, and lacking norms.

*Autonomy.* Autonomy was the most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the traditional setting. "The concept of autonomy is perhaps most commonly discussed in reference to professional independence in schools, particularly the degree to which teachers can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it" (Hidden Curriculum, 2014, para. 1). Collectively, all eight respondents mentioned how there are more freedoms and liberties and flexibility to being a teacher. Participant 005 described her experience at the traditional public settings as:

Most things are optional even though all of the staff will come to them. I feel like because they don't ask us to do as much, they don't ask us to submit as much, they don't ask us to do as much in general, that gives me more time and more freedom to really make my lessons better.(Participant 005, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

"Research has shown that teachers actually seek autonomy in ideal teaching situations; When they(teachers) are given autonomy, teachers remain in the profession longer than their counterparts who feel stifled" (Mihans, 2008, p. 764). "Experienced K-12 teachers say that issues of autonomy (along with related issues of decision-making authority and administrative

support) influence their perception of teaching more than issues of student management and classroom behavior,” (Mihans, 2008, p. 764). Autonomy relates to teacher empowerment, one of the study’s variables, because teachers want to feel supported when making decisions regarding student learning. Results for this question supports how teachers want to continue to feel empowered by remaining autonomous in the midst of the many other systems taking place in a traditional public school.

***Fewer obligations and less pressure.*** Having fewer obligations and feeling less pressure was the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the traditional setting. Six participants mentioned how in the traditional public school environment they experienced low levels of micromanagement and low demands. Participant 007 described his experience of having fewer obligations and less pressure as, “You come in, you clock in, you go to your classroom, and you carry on your day as you’ve been trained to do as a teacher” (Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017).

Research also suggest, “Given the logic of limited resources, teachers must take honest stock of the scope of their influence and what degree of good they can do as not to burn out” (Santoro, 2011, p. 10). Fewer obligations and less pressure relates to teacher empowerment, one of the study’s variables, because for teachers to feel they are strategically using their time mundane task should be limited as much as possible so teachers feel supported in purposeful efforts toward student growth.

***Union protection.*** Teacher union protection was the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the traditional setting. Three participants mentioned how in the traditional public setting they experienced more union protection. For example, Participant 001 articulated how having a union was beneficial, and a second participant said how

having set work hours allowed better personal and professional planning. Participant 003 describes his experience feeling less burden in the traditional public setting as:

I feel like the working conditions are much better at my public district school for a few reasons. First of all, I'm in a union here, so there's a lot of things that our administrators never ask us to do. For example, they'll never ask us to do anything during lunch, which I really appreciate. (Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Participants described how from their experience there were clear outlined work hours and limits on what could and could not be asked of teachers. Participants were very specific on how having union protection and solidified work hours influenced their experience in a traditional public setting. "Unionization impacts staff and student culture" (Lovenheim, 2009, p.9). Union protection relates to teacher empower, one of the study's variables, because this organization is designed particularly to empower teachers when they need support. Having union protection empowers teachers to stay focused on their task of teaching and making strides toward student learning.

***Lacking norms.*** Lacking norms was the fourth most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the traditional setting. Every group has a set of norms, or a code of conduct, about what is acceptable behavior to everyone in the group (Oxford Brookes University, 2011). Having norms in place gives a sense of team spirit and willingness of its members to coordinate their efforts in the best organized manner (Oxford Brookes University, 2011). Three participants mentioned how in the traditional public setting they experienced less formal routines in place that outlined clear staff expectations. Participants described how due to lack of uniformity the way staff meetings ran to the way students behaved in class varied because few of unclear expectations. Participant 005 connected his experience of lack of norms in the

traditional public setting to the fact of how the environment already has autonomy, and added that support from a union; those ingredients naturally support an environment with little to no clear expectations. Participant 004 suggested school administrators select a mantra or motto that everyone in the traditional public setting knows, practices, and buy-ins to. “I think there needs to be traditions or...I don’t want to call them rules, but just things that an administration says and then they stick by” (Participant 005, personal communication, March 15, 2017).

Teachers in the traditional public setting want to have clear expectations of them as teachers and look to administrators to provide standards. School leadership, one of the sub-factors in the study’s eight variables of working conditions, has a significant influence on if the above standards are clearly communicated to teachers so that all teachers feel they are safe and support in any collaborative community at school. Lacking norms relates to school leadership, one of the study’s variables, because school leaders are responsible for creating, implementing, and designing systems for all stakeholders who participate in it to know what the expectations are. School leadership can help implement norms in the traditional public setting by fostering a collaborative environment that encourages staff input, which in this case, collaboratively brainstorm norms, that the traditional public community can all agree on and follow.

**Research question 2.** The second research question sought to discover what were teachers’ working conditions in a secondary charter school. To engage in this investigation the researcher asked one interview question to reveal experiences working conditions in a secondary charter school.

***Extra duties.*** Extra duties was the first most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the district charter setting. Extra duties in a district charter setting according to four participants varied from filing papers, being asked to complete task during



lunch time, having class bulletin boards a particular way, or filling out forms. The average length of the teacher work day and year are longer in charter schools (Podgursky & Ballou, 2001).

Participant 003 described his experience as, “Besides meetings we had certain jobs to do outside of the work area, for example, call homes of students-one good and one bad, or organizing portfolios” (Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017).

Additional duties like the above are not out of the ordinary for district charter schools. Extra duties could range from daily office task to working more days in the calendar year. Teachers already have multiple tasks under the umbrella of instruction. Extra duties outside of teaching make the job that much more cumbersome. Adding extra duties to district charter teachers takes away from a teacher feeling empowered to spend quality time on meaningful task, for example, student learning. Extra duties relates to teacher empowerment, one of the study’s variables, because for teachers to feel they are strategically using their wisely extra task outside of teaching should be limited as much as possible so teachers feel supported in purposeful efforts toward student growth.

*Collaboration and relationships with colleagues.* Collaboration and relationships with colleagues was the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in the district charter setting. Collaboration was a hallmark feature of participant’s experience in a district charter setting. According to participants there are consistent days for collaboration and professional development. As a result of frequent collaboration, there appears to be a natural relationship bond among district charter school staff where teachers are more than colleagues learning alongside each other. Bonds become very supportive where district charter teachers not only gain insightful work experience but gain lifelong friends. Participant 002 describes his experience in a secondary district charter school as, “There are probably only fifteen teachers

and you got to know everyone really well. You kind of work with everybody from all different subjects” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017).

Work in this area also demonstrates that when teachers had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues (Hargreaves, 2001; Klecker & Loadman, 1999; Kushman, 1992) and improve their professional skills and abilities (Kushman, 1992) they were significantly more satisfied with their role as a teacher than those who did not have these experiences (Perrachione et al., 2008). Collaboration and relationships with colleagues relates to collaboration with colleagues and teacher empowerment, two variables in this study, because school leaders are responsible for strategically planning cycles of collaboration with staff on campus and it appears strategic collaboration at the district charter setting is taking place. Collaboration and relationships with colleagues also relate to collaboration with colleagues because teachers understand the value of collaborating with other teachers to share best practices and goal set.

***Pressure and stress.*** Feelings of pressure and stress was the third most frequent theme in relation to working conditions in a district charter setting. Participants mentioned how as a result of the lack of autonomy in a district charter setting no matter how much work they did as a teacher or in completing extra duties it was never enough for district charter administrators. With extra pressures, one participant mentioned, how it made teachers do unethical things and another participant mentioned those same stressors caused her and other teachers to teach in unnatural ways. Participant 006 describes her experience with district charter pressure and stress as:

It was a lot of jumping through the hoops and by that I mean all the extra time spent on test practice, test practice, test practice. It was very stressful, it kinda pushed you into an unnatural way of teaching. So you would move away from what you know as a professional to be good pedagogy, and you would have to push yourself into this box.

And that was my experience in two, three different charter settings. (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

In numerous studies of the microsystem of the classroom, Brofenbrenner (as cited by Less et al., 1991) reported that the most influential factors on teachers' self-efficacy are (a) the types of students in the classroom, and (b) the amount of control a teacher has in determining the classroom environment. For example, "Control over classroom discipline enables teachers to decide on the agenda and operation of the classroom, while the lack of control often makes them feel hindered and ineffective" (Less et al., 1991, p. 20). Pressure and stress relates to teacher empowerment and school leadership, two of the study's variables, because if teachers are not physically and mentally healthy to continue teaching, teachers will not feel empowered, encouraged, nor motivated to continue as a secondary teachers. Pressure and stress also relates to school leadership because considering resources are already limited in a district charter environment, school leadership can help manage and delegate additional task without overwhelming teachers.

***Lack of autonomy.*** Lack of autonomy was the fourth most frequently mentioned theme in relation to working conditions in a district charter setting. Participants 003 and 007 mentioned how in a district charter setting teachers were not trusted to make professional decisions as teachers, which for them resulted in unnecessary helicoptering and constant check-ins which made it difficult to continue professionally. "If principals respond to a perceived lack of motivation among experienced teachers by over specifying rules and procedures, they jeopardize the task discretion and autonomy so valued by mid-career teachers, with the unintended result of creating even greater alienation and poorer performance" (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1999, p. 254). Lack of autonomy relates to teacher empowerment, one of the study's variables, because

teachers want flexibility to make choices related to their students with minimal levels of management school leadership. Results for this question supports how district charter school teachers want to continue to feel empowered by remaining autonomous in the midst of the many other systems taking place in a district charter school.

**Research question 3.** The third research question invited participants to investigate how did the working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional school setting compare. Three themes emerged from the analysis of participant responses to interview questions three, facilities, resources, supplies, and materials, and less pressure and less stress.

**Facilities.** Facilities was the first most frequently mentioned theme in relation to how working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional setting compared. While all eight participants acknowledge school size in both a traditional public and district charter schools are different, all eight also agree there is more facility space for classes, meetings, and activities in the traditional public setting. Participant 008 described her comparative experience as, “The traditional school is a lot bigger. The campus has more students, obviously, and there are a lot more facilities in the traditional school than the charter school” (Participant 008, personal communication, March 16, 2017). “Large warehouse-type high schools in which teachers see 150 or more students daily, cycling anonymously through the classroom in fragmented 45-minute periods, create alienation and anomie because they support neither learning nor teaching well” (Darling- Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 273). Five participants mentioned how school size and space influenced their experiences in both environments. Secondary district charter schools are typically smaller in size, have fewer facility spaces for activities or instruction outside of core classes, and are more likely to need renovation. Previous research shows that inadequate facilities and lack of teaching materials are associated with high teacher turnover rates although

the association ranges from small to large (Wei et al., 2014). Facilities relates to facilities, one of the variables in the study, because the facility type and size influences the experiences staff have. In this case, teachers experienced both positive and negative experiences of large and small facility spaces.

***Resources, supplies, and materials.*** Resources, supplies and materials were the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to how working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional school settings compared. While four participants mentioned that both the traditional public and district charter setting both have supplies for instruction, one of the four participants went on to explain from their experience in a district charter setting human resources are also scarce. Participant 006 describes her experience with district charter resources, supplies, and materials as, “My first school I had awesome resources and got my own classroom. Another school I worked at had all the resources I wanted. It was awesome” (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017). While one charter may experience great resources another charter may experience challenges with resources. Participant 005 described his experience with scarce district charter resources, supplies, and materials as:

Like any school I think a school needs a lot of money to function. My charter school just didn't have a lot of extra money to spend on things and we definitely could feel that as teachers. We couldn't buy them (students) what we needed to make a good environment for our students. (Participant 008, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Among the aspects of working conditions that must be addressed is the facility itself and the availability of adequate supplies with which to teach (Mihans, 2008). Resources and supplies relates to resources, one of the study's variables, because schools with adequate resources, both human and capital resources, in this case teachers, can provide a variety of learning opportunities

for students and vice versa students can have learning experiences more aligned to 21st century learning. Having human resources in a district charter setting is also critical because having people to actually do what it takes to operate a district charter can assist in not distributing extra duties to teachers because of the lack of human sources.

*Less pressure and less stress.* Less pressure and less stress was the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation how working conditions experienced in the charter and traditional school settings compared. Three participants mentioned how there are fewer demands at the traditional public setting, for example, not having to turn in two weeks' worth of lesson plans, having more support from specialized teams, and teachers having a choice in school involvement. "Charter schools with the greatest autonomy from their districts have been found to be more consumed by managerial decisions and day-to-day operational issues, leaving less time to attend to issues of teaching and learning" (Santoro, 2011, p. 5). Participant 001 describes his experience as:

It was definitely less stressful in traditional. Things were a lot lackadaisical, but in charter, because they were smaller and because you're at-will, they demanded a lot more and you did it and you were scared to lose your job, so I think the working conditions at both charters were more stressful. Both charters I got let go for ridiculous reasons, so being at a traditional I think you're safer. (Participant 001, personal communication, March 9, 2017).

Pressure and stress relates to teacher empowerment and school leadership, two of the study's variables, because if teachers are not physically and mentally healthy to teach, teachers will not feel empowered, encouraged, nor motivated to continue as a secondary teachers. Pressure and stress also relates to school leadership because considering resources are already limited in a

district charter environment, school leadership can help manage and delegate additional task without overwhelming teachers.

**Research question 4.** The fourth research question invited participants to investigate what would be teachers' ideal secondary traditional school environment. Four themes emerged from the analysis of participant responses to interview question four, support from administration, smaller school and smaller class sizes, collaboration and cooperative staff, and instructional supplies. Four themes emerged from the analysis of participant responses to interview question five, treated as a professional, student access to extra-curricular activities, readily available resources, and a work and life balance.

*Support from administration.* Support from administration was the first most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal traditional public setting. Participants stated how they would like administrators in the traditional public setting to be more involved in teacher collaboration and professional development. Participant 003 describes his desire for traditional public administrative support as, "If I want my principal to come observe me, I know he will as soon as he can, which is really supportive if I'm looking for feedback" (Participant 003, personal communication, March 12, 2017). "Although resources and working conditions certainly matter, research suggests that teachers choose to enter and remain in schools where they feel well supported in their efforts to teach" (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 259). Participants also mentioned how in most traditional public schools they are so large that it becomes challenging for administrators to plan purposeful professional developments. Support from administration relates to school leadership and teacher empowerment, two of the study's variables, because teachers look for guidance and support which in the long run motivates and encourages them to continue working toward student growth. As much as teachers enjoy autonomy in the traditional

public setting, having support from school leadership is just as important. Teachers would like to know that support will be genuinely provided and that administrators sincerely are interested in teachers' work.

***Smaller school and class sizes.*** Smaller campus size and class sizes were the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal traditional public setting. Three participants proposed a decreased campus size, naturally class sizes would decrease. All three participants said their ideal class size would be between 20-30 students creating a student to campus supervision ratio that is sustainable. Participant 002 describes her ideal traditional public setting as, "I feel like twenty kids would be a perfect class size for me. To be able to feel like you're working with the whole school" (Participant 003, personal communication, March 12, 2017). Research shows, higher pupil-teacher ratios have been found to associate with high teacher turnover (Stuit & Smith, 2012). Smaller school and class size relates to facilities, one of the study's variables, because school size influences the experiences teachers have at the traditional public setting. Teachers understand the value of having small enough classes for closer monitoring. Teachers also value the idea of a small school size to better facilitate school culture, interventions, and other activities, therefore, could see the benefits of a smaller traditional public school setting.

***Collaboration and cooperative staff.*** Collaboration and a cooperative staff was the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal traditional public setting. Four participants gave mention to how collaboration at the traditional public setting would be a great start toward student growth at the secondary level. "A growing body of research suggest that better outcomes are achieved by personal-communal school models that foster common learning experiences, opportunities for cooperative work and continual relationships, and greater



participation of parents, teachers, and students” (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 274). Large warehouse-type high schools in which teachers see 150 or more students daily, cycling anonymously through the classroom in fragmented 45-minute periods, create alienation and anomie because they support neither learning nor teaching well (Hammond & Berry, 1999). Participants recognized that although traditional public schools are typically larger, which can deter collaboration, they would still like to see collaboration occur at least twice a month according to three participants. Participant 006 describes her current experience with collaboration as, “There are a lot of staff members and out of fifty you might know five. You know that you know them because you work with them, but then you really don’t” (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017). Having cooperative staff members was an additional feature to an ideal traditional public setting where teachers have a growth mindset and actually want to collaborate in the name of student learning and growth. Participants understood the value of purposeful collaboration and in addition see a value to having teachers on board who also want to collaborate for the betterment of student learning. Collaboration and having a cooperative staff relates to collaboration with colleagues and teacher empowerment, two variables in this study, because school leaders are responsible for strategically planning cycles of collaboration with staff on campus. Teachers understand the value of collaborating with other teachers to share best practices and goal set and would like to continue. Results from this question also point out that teachers recognize that collaboration is more effective when teachers participate who want to collaborate and put effort because it makes a difference.

***Instructional supplies.*** Instructional supplies was the fourth most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal traditional public school setting. Four participants mentioned an ideal traditional environment being one where there are readily available resources for

instruction, for example, technology, curriculum, and materials for hands on learning experiences.

We learned that charter schools depending on their location and access to private resources, use a number of strategies to garner social, political, financial, and material support. In several instances the need to generate funds increased the workload of an already-strapped staff because extra funding came with extra demands that took charter school educators away from developing their vision of a truly community-based school. While this happens to some extent in all charter schools and in regular public schools and in regular public schools as well, the problem is exacerbated in the charter schools in poor communities that are struggling to remain *fiscally* viable. (Wells & Research Associates, 1998, p. 150)

Participant 005 describes her ideal traditional public as:

First and foremost, a school that is equipped to serve the needs of the students, having the majority of the resources they would need to address the student's needs and whether that is human resources or whether it's physical- resources, books, curriculum, materials for hands-on experiences.(Participant 005, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Instructional supplies relates to resources, one of the study's variables, because schools with adequate instructional supplies can provide a variety of learning opportunities for students and vice versa students can have learning experiences more aligned to twenty first century learning.

***Treated as a professional.*** Treated as a professional was the first most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter environment. All eight participants mentioned how their ideal secondary district charter setting would be one where teachers are trusted that the decisions they make in the classroom are to support students, therefore, should

not be micromanaged nor given mundane task. Participant 002 describes her ideal district charter environment as, “The environment that I’m really enjoying right now has to do with the professionalism and being treated to do my job well and that I’m well prepared to do my job well” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017). She went on to further explain, “...I think being treated like a professional and being trusted to do your job is really important” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017). “If charter school teachers have the professional autonomy to make changes in their classrooms and in the school as a whole, the structure of school may lead to more positive effects of working with students” (Renzulli et al., 2011, p. 29 ). Being treated as a professional relates to teacher empowerment and school leadership, two variables in this study, because they are the ones on the front line doing the work. Teachers want make decisions related to student learning based on their expertise. School leadership can support teachers feel like a professional by trusting their work in the classroom.

***Student access to extracurricular activities.*** Student access to extracurricular activities was the second most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter environment. A majority of the participants envisioned their ideal district charter school full of activities for district charter students to tap into their interest and involved with things outside of core academics. Among the aspects of working conditions that must be addressed is the facility itself and the availability of adequate supplies with which to teach (Mihans, 2008). Since most district charter schools are limited on facility space, participants acknowledge there still needs to be physical space for students to go to for exercise, sports and other extracurricular activities. Participants recognized how from their experience in their secondary district charter school, their schools lacked extracurricular activities and clubs. Participant 008 described her ideal district

charter environment as, “Students having opportunities to join clubs and sports outside of my class. That makes them more well-rounded and makes them excited about school” (Participant 008, personal communication, March 16, 2017). Participants felt with more activities that encouraged student leadership, team building, collaboration, and trust students and staff would better enjoy their experience in a secondary district charter. Participant 003 also described his ideal district charter environment as:

Facilities were something we didn’t really have. We have kids that are into sports, if they play basketball having a gym or a field. Or kids that are into the arts having a drama club where they can do that. (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Student access to extra-curricular activities relates to facilities, one of the study’s variables, because the facility type and size influences the experiences students have outside of coursework. Participants for this question expressed urgency behind obtaining additional facility space because teachers understand the value in having additional activities for students to be involved in to better develop their character and interest.

***Readily available resources.*** Resources was the third most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter setting. Participants 004 and 007 both mentioned how in their ideal district charter environment there are financial resources in place for long term sustainability while one participant mentioned charters should have readily available technology for staff and students. “The ability to operate with less public support is simply assumed by some charter school proponents as proof of how education can be carried out for less money” (Wells & Research Associates, 1998, p. 149). Participant 002 acknowledges the fact that district charter schools are funded differently and goes on to explain, “I know that usually charters are funded

by certain organizations or donations” (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017).

With this acknowledge of alternative forms of funding teachers still require available resources for student learning. Readily available resources relates to resources, one of the study’s variables, because schools with readily available resources can provide a variety of learning opportunities for students and vice versa students can have learning experiences more aligned to twenty first century learning.

***Work and life balance.*** Work and life balance was the fourth most frequently mentioned theme in relation to an ideal district charter environment. Participants explained how in the district charter setting the workload is continuous and at times feels never ending. Participants described how with extra duties at times it became unclear what constituted teacher duties and extra duties per their contract. Participants explained how working at a secondary district charter school could be challenging while maintaining a family. Participant 007 described her ideal district charter environment as:

Consideration for work-life balance because the workload of a teacher can be very overwhelming and you have to be careful about keeping the balance. I think that you shouldn’t feel threatened that you might lose your job if you try to maintain a balance. And what I mean by that is, some days you have to say, “I have to leave, I have to go home, it’s four o’clock.” And it would be great if you didn’t feel like, But this could cost me my job.(Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Participants mentioned how there needs to be a balance between what is expected of a district charter school teacher and personal health. When teachers do not experience a balance of work and life it is common to experience burnout.

Burnout is studied most frequently by psychologists who examine how an individual's personality, physical and mental health, and coping strategies help to manage stress.

Psychologists also investigate how the school environment appears to support and inhibit teachers in completing the task that they are expected to accomplish; these studies yield important information about individuals who choose to enter the profession, the strains and demands of the work of teaching, and the kinds of institutional supports and leadership that can attenuate work pressure. (Santoro, 2011, p. 10)

Participant 001 explains similar unbalanced work and life experiences in a district charter setting as, "I've worked at two charter organizations and they were quite, quite opposite experiences. Both, to me, were similarly unsustainable and which is a shame especially if you are a single parent, it's not a good life and work balance." (Participant 001, personal communication, March 9, 2017). Work and life balance relates to teacher empowerment, one of the study's variables, because when teachers feel there is a balance between their professional and personal lives, teachers feel less burdened and can spend time on other interests. Teachers will feel empowered to utilize time more efficiently and not feel pressure where lines are blurred between work and their personal life.

## **Conclusions**

Three conclusions can be made from this study (a) expectations and demands of secondary teachers are increasing in non-charter and charter school settings, (b) teachers want to feel supported as professionals in every work environment, and (c) teachers would like to have a culture of continuous learning.

**Increased expectations and demands.** Expectations and demands on secondary teachers are increasing in non-charter and charter schools. In addition to classroom and societal issues, the

use of technology and more rigorous curriculum have increased the demands and expectations of teachers. Based on data from this study, teachers in both the district charter and traditional public setting are experiencing multiple preparation periods, long work days, longer calendar school years, challenges with drug and alcohol use. Some of the teachers also expressed instances of doubting job security. Two participants clearly articulated how despite extra work demands there was constant concern about job security at the district charter level if additional tasks were not fulfilled. Participant 007 stated:

The lack of a union meant that there were very few protective mechanisms in place in terms of what teachers were asked to do or required to do. It felt like we were constantly given new task to our jobs and there were no protections about how much time that would take or if it really was in the realm or the scope of what a teacher should be doing. (Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Participant 003 similarly articulates:

It always felt like no matter how great a job you were doing, it was the management or administrator; they oftentimes dealt with the staff as if it was never enough. It was, nothing's ever enough and everyone's job is at stake. So you certainly felt the need to do whatever you could to protect your job. Whether that meant working extremely long hours, twelve and thirteen hours to try to get the job done that'd never get done anyway. (Participant 003, personal communication, March 12, 2017)

Studies have suggested such aspects as role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and stress to be predictors of job satisfaction (Perrachione et al., 2008). Increased expectations and demands experienced by secondary teachers may result in role overload and stress which in turn negatively affect job satisfaction and teacher retention. The reporting of secondary teachers that

expectations and demands have increased in non-charter and charter school settings is consistent with the literature. Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999) stated:

Nearly every aspect of teaching work has become more complex and challenging in recent years. Today's teachers encounter a range of classroom and social conditions—among them, multilingual classrooms, increased mainstreaming of special education students, growing numbers of students living in poverty and from single-parent families that compound an already complex set of professional challenges. (p. 267)

One participant acknowledges the above demands, “I think a lot of stuff should still be on administration and we should be concentrating on teaching” (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017).

The first conclusion relates to the study's conceptual model under working conditions because teachers feel demands from every level of Wei et al.'s (2014) eight subfactors related to working conditions which are: (a) school leadership, (b) teacher empowerment, (c) collaboration with colleagues, (d) professional development, (e) mentoring/support, (f) facilities, (g) resources, and (h) student behavior (Wei et al., 2013; see Appendix A). School leadership can regulate extra duties given to secondary teachers in both district charters and traditional public schools. When a particular school environment, district charter school and traditional public, experience more opportunities for collaboration, professional development, mentoring/support with peers than the other environment, those limited opportunities limit teachers' ability in the opposite environment to learn management and teaching skills to fulfill extra duties. Resources can often support teachers at the secondary level to assist in managing extra demands on teachers, which would also include human and capital resources. Facility space relates to extra demands and task on teachers because based on the school environment, district charter or traditional public, may not



have the physical space, or facilities, to carry out extra demands and duties efficiently and effectively. Last, student behavior relates to the study's conceptual model because secondary teachers are experiencing additional demands in the classroom with many particular needs and experiences.

**Supported as professionals.** Teachers want to feel supported as professionals in every work environment. Secondary teachers in this study shared that they would like to feel that they have made experienced decisions related to student learning without justifying their actions, being put under pressure to meet gregarious demands, or redirected to use strategies outside of familiarity. Teachers would like to feel supported in their growth and not micromanaged where teachers lose their unique teaching styles. Two teachers speak to feelings of deflated spirits, particularly, in the district charter setting, where their teachers' professional input was disregarded leaving teachers feeling professionally inadequate. Participant 002 articulated clear support in "giving them (teachers) autonomy and trusting their professional judgment because unnecessary helicoptering of teachers can be very demoralizing" (Participant 002, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 007 describes what teachers ought to feel like based on her current teaching site which in her case would be her ideal environment of professional treatment:

What I love about it is that we are treated as professionals and we are given a lot of latitude as we plan our lessons, and work with our students. I felt that my charter school job there was so much additional accountability. I felt like I was constantly filling out forms, proving to somebody that I was doing my job and I feel like here, I'm trusted as a professional, that I am doing my job well and then for the people who aren't, the

administration will come in and deal with that. (Participant 007, personal communication, March 15, 2017)

Teachers' desire to feel supported as professionals in every work environment is supported in the professional literature. They have shown that teachers are more efficacious when they have more control over their own classroom practices (Less et al., 1991).

The second conclusion relates to the study's conceptual model under working conditions because teachers would like the satisfaction of regarded as a professional with skills to make responsible choices in and outside the classroom regarding student learning. School leadership, one of Wei et al.'s (2014) eight sub-factors, directly relates to teachers wanting to be supported as professionals because administrators are the primary stakeholder in establishing a culture of collegiate trust and respect. Teacher empowerment, also one of Wei et al.'s (2014) eight subfactors, relates to this study's second conclusion because when teachers have professional respect from administrators they have a sense of transparency and trust that decisions made in the classroom are purposeful. When teachers decide related to the students they see everyday without constantly justifying nor clarifying decisions, teachers will feel more efficacious as a professional educator.

**Culture of continuous learning.** Teachers would like a culture of continuous professional learning to learn how to become a better teacher. Teachers know that their students in both a district charter and traditional public setting all come from diverse backgrounds that require professional learning to encourage student growth. Three secondary teachers from this study know of their impact on student learning and growth through engaging and impactful teaching. Participant 005 expresses his passion for continuing a culture of lifelong learning as:

I actually have the power, motivation, and desire to change the world by educating my students on such things as what is a just society. I'm starting to think outside the daily curriculum that I'm teaching. I continue to evolve as a teacher. (Participant 005, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant 006 could experience a consistent culture of collaboration at her previous school and the same culture of collaboration in her ideal traditional environment which shows the awareness of the importance of continuous learning despite the school type and location. "The one thing they always, always had was the collaboration. We constantly had meeting at least once a week. It was consistent and I liked that" (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017). Participant 006 later explains her ideal environment as having, "Collaboration. There has to be twice a month, something and it can't just be like, 'Oh yeah, we want this form filled out,' and they don't do anything with it" (Participant 006, personal communication, March 15, 2017). Two participants understand that to create a culture of continuous learning an alliance of likeminded staff and teachers must already be in place who also want to sharpen their tools to become more effective teachers. Participant 001 acknowledges, "Getting to know all your colleagues and all your faculty members and everybody that works there and building a professional relationship so that when you can work together and it'll make the school better" (Participant 001, personal communication, March 9, 2017). Participant 007 states, "I just think those relationships are the most important component of a quality and successful competent school" (Participant 007 personal communication, March 15, 2017). Literature supports fostering communal and collaborative school environments, "A principal can help to retain his or her teachers by creating school structures that promote integrated professional cultures with time during the day for frequent exchanges of information and ideas across experience levels" (Mihans, 2008, p. 765).

Literature also supports the third conclusion stating, Secondary educators are looking for their educational institutions the schools in which they work, to provide opportunities for teachers to learn effective strategies meanwhile strengthening the whole child. Secondary teachers' desire to work in a culture of continuous learning is supported by professional literature stating, "Good teaching is not only about cultivating individual teachers' dispositions toward good work but structuring work to enable practitioners to do good within its domain. Such work requires a community of practice that can draw on the tradition of teaching" (Santoro, 2011, p. 19).

The third conclusion relates to the study's conceptual model under working conditions because teachers know of the new realities of the classroom, use of scientifically proven instructional strategies, use of technology, classroom management, parental involvement, yet, still have a strong desire to stay abreast of skills to maintain a functional classroom environment. Collaboration with colleagues, mentoring and support, and professional development, three of Wei et al.'s (2014) subfactors, directly relate to teachers yearning for a culture of continuous learning because through cultures of collaboration teachers can converse with others on best practices. Teachers in this study showed appreciation for opportunities to develop into a well-rounded, twenty-first century teacher because they saw the rewards in trying to invest in their own learning so they feel empowered.

### **Recommendations**

"Just as policies can create shortages, they can also eliminate them" (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 261).

With knowledge of how district charter schools and traditional public school teachers' perceptions of school organizational factors differ, policymakers and school leaders can

strategically focus their efforts on addressing workplace conditions that may underlie teacher retention and student achievement, and represent unmet needs among teachers.(Wei et al., 2014, p. 20)

Today's teachers encounter a range of classroom and social conditions-among them, multilingual classrooms, increased mainstreaming of special education students, growing numbers of students living in poverty and from single-parent families-that compound an already complex set of professional challenges; Given these added challenges, it is imperative that teachers be provided with much greater access to knowledge about teaching and learning before and during their careers(Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Below are recommendations for education policy makers on how to create workable environments for Southern Californian teachers in both traditional public and district charter schools.

### **General recommendations.**

*1. District and teacher induction self-care programs.* Credential programs and district administrators should consider infusing courses outside of curriculum pedagogy to prepare teachers for the realities of the teaching for a better work-life balance. "Postsecondary institutions can help in the teacher retention process by giving teacher candidates more realistic meaningful opportunities," (Shields, 2009, p. 97).

*2. Exit interviews.* Exit interviews could really serve administrators in the district office in the traditional public setting and district charter settings well when a teacher is leaving the organization. Having purposeful questions around teacher satisfaction and recommendations on how to make the environment more conducive for working would be beneficial.

Such surveys should include questions for teachers such as: When, why and how do you find value in your work? What enables you to teach at your best? What prevents you

from engaging in good teaching? While some responses to these questions may be cynical or blame students and their families it is likely that they will also point to aspects of policies that require revision in the interdependent goals of improving student learning and retaining talented teachers; these questions could serve as a catalyst for productive, although, difficult, conversations at school and district levels. (Santoro, 2011, p. 19)

At the end of each school year, administrators should thoroughly look at feedback from exit interviews and implement changes for the following school year. As a result of most district charter schools not having a union, conducting exit interviews should be a part of the criteria for charter schools to pass accreditation.

**3. *Autonomy.*** All teachers should want to go to work and feel satisfied about their job. It appears teachers who have autonomy and flexibility are happy in their environment. “Administrators need to allow teachers more than academic freedom and need to find ways to make teachers feel like the professionals they are” (Shields, 2009, p. 84). Teachers who are not micromanaged, doing mundane task, and can actually teach will do well in their craft. When teachers can make professional decisions based on their expertise is when teachers feel they have an honest stake in student’s growth as a lifelong learner.

**4. *Blend of both environments.*** Both environments have their benefits. Based on data from this study it appeared participants would find a blend between a district charter and traditional public to be an ideal environment. A school that has a manageable student population, class sizes are manageable for teachers to support, a school with enough updated and operational facilities, extracurricular activities for students to participate in, and a staff size that is manageable for purposeful professional development, collaboration with colleagues, and mentoring and support. “Weber (1947) suggested that the rationalization and bureaucratization of

an organization increase with size, making the human interaction that sustain a sense of community more difficult in larger environments” (Less et al., 1991, p. 17).

**District charter recommendations.**

**1. *Additional stipulations for charter approval.*** It was mentioned by participants that it would be nice to have a charter agency which serves as a non-bias role to ensure charter schools are not just fulfilling accountability through results, but also checks for teacher, student, and parent support and satisfaction more aggressively. This agency, in addition to making sure charters are fulfilling their obligation of accountability through results, also conducts surveys to monitor working conditions to better support a work-life balance for staff but also a healthy learning environment for students. Part of the above process would also include stakeholder input, for example, donors who contribute to charters can receive feedback on if their money is being used to their satisfaction based on school performance and organizational morale. During the charter renewal process district charter grantors should make at least three site visits during the first year of operation of a new school. A walk through should be done to ensure there is actual space for the proposed student population, for physical education, for food service for nutrition and lunch times, extra-curricular activities, and restrooms for staff and students.

**2. *Extra-curricular activities for students.*** District charter schools should incorporate courses beyond core courses, for example, English Language Arts (ELA), and mathematics. Students in district charter schools should also have access to extracurricular activities with provided space, for example, band, Associated Student Body (ASB), other student clubs, and athletics before and after school.

**3. *Less remedial task.*** Teachers in district charter schools should have the opportunity to focus primarily on teaching to ensure students are showing growth. As a result of district charter

schools showing accountability through results, there are many remedial task that fall outside of teaching expectations which in the short and long terms take away from district charter teachers' time.

**4. *Teacher empowerment.*** Teachers in district charter schools should be trusted to make professional decisions based on their expertise in their subject. “Administrators need to support faculty autonomy and give them authority to manage their own curriculum and classrooms” (Shields, 2009, p. 84). Teachers in district charter schools should be able to instruct and not feel pressured, micromanaged, and over worked without some form of reasonable protection. Teachers in a district charter setting should not fear losing their job if they do not complete task outside of teaching.

**5. *Redefine accountability through results.*** Charter policy makers at the state and federal levels should redefine the concept of *accountability through results*. In fact, accountability policies that attempt to pinpoint the effectiveness of a single teacher do not reflect the realities of teacher collaboration, supplemental instruction, and other adults who provide services to students. “More than 9 out of 10 charter schools used student achievement test, augmented by other measures of student performance and school success, to make reports to their chartering agency, the school’s governing board, and/or parents” (Nelson, et al., 2000, p. 9). Like any institution, there should be yearly performance goals on progress and steps on how to achieve those goals. Instead of charter authorities requiring particular quantitative yearly results, charter policy makers should collaborate with charter grantor authorities on alternative ways to define and achieve accountability. Beyond, formal testing, what other mechanisms can charter schools use to define and capture as evidence student growth and progress, meanwhile, maintaining a work-life balance for teachers and community involvement.



## **Traditional public recommendations.**

*1. Purposeful collaboration with colleagues and professional development.* As a result of traditional public school's size being large, site administrators should make purposeful effort to plan professional developments and collaboration with colleagues consistently. "School leadership is an important factor in fostering effective teaching and learning" (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997, p. 159). By building school community staff members can share best instructional practices and continue building relationships with other staff members who they probably would not interact with otherwise.

Most reformers now agree that increasing teachers' expertise and effectiveness is critical to the success of ongoing efforts to reform our nation's schools. Quick fixes like truncated training and combat pay have been tried for many decades without addressing the conditions that would prevent shortages in the first place which includes preparation and professional development that enables success on the job. (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p.275)

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

**1. Systems building in public schools.** As a result of public school environments changing, further study ought to continue on what systems should be in place to support specific public school environments, for example, traditional public and district charter schools. "The goal of offering caring, competent, and qualified teachers to all students in all communities is one that requires systemic strategies for improving the functioning of schools and school systems" (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 275).

**2. Work/life balance in charters.** It would be nice to conduct further research on what strategies secondary district charter school teachers use who have worked in a district charter for

five or more years. It would be interesting to know, in our case, what working condition variables:(a) school leadership, (b) collaboration with colleagues, (c) professional development, (d) mentoring/support, (e) resources, (f) facilities, (g) student behavior, and (h) teacher empowerment were or are effectively in place and how did or do those factors support teachers when it came to feeling they had a balance between work and home. Professional expertise should also be consulted when investigating and providing recommendations on the emotional, physical, and psychological effects of working in particular public school environments where school and district administrators are also involved in the conversation.

**3. Charter school resource sustainability research.** Education authorities should compile a team of experts to investigate trends, commonalities, and systems already in place in secondary district charter schools where teachers are satisfied with their work conditions in both affluent and non-affluent areas where teachers feel supported by school leadership, there are opportunities for professional development, collaboration with colleagues, and mentoring and support, there are sufficient resources, student behavior is manageable, facilities are updated and plentiful for student extracurricular activities, and teachers are empowered to make decisions as professional educators and are not micro managed.

### **Summary**

This hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to probe the work conditions and professional beliefs of eight Southern California secondary (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school teachers who have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience to learn more about what constitutes ideal working conditions for secondary teachers. The study found there are assets and challenges to working in both a traditional public and

district charter schools. For example, school size/facility space, teacher autonomy, collaboration with colleagues, and a work/life balance were significant themes throughout the study's four research questions. Themes that manifested from the study also complemented literature related to secondary ideal working conditions. Based on the school environment, traditional public or district charter, determined participants ability to relationship build with students and other staff members, determined their ability to make professional decisions without being micromanaged or given extra duties outside of teaching, and whether or not they could sustain themselves as an educator in the same environment.

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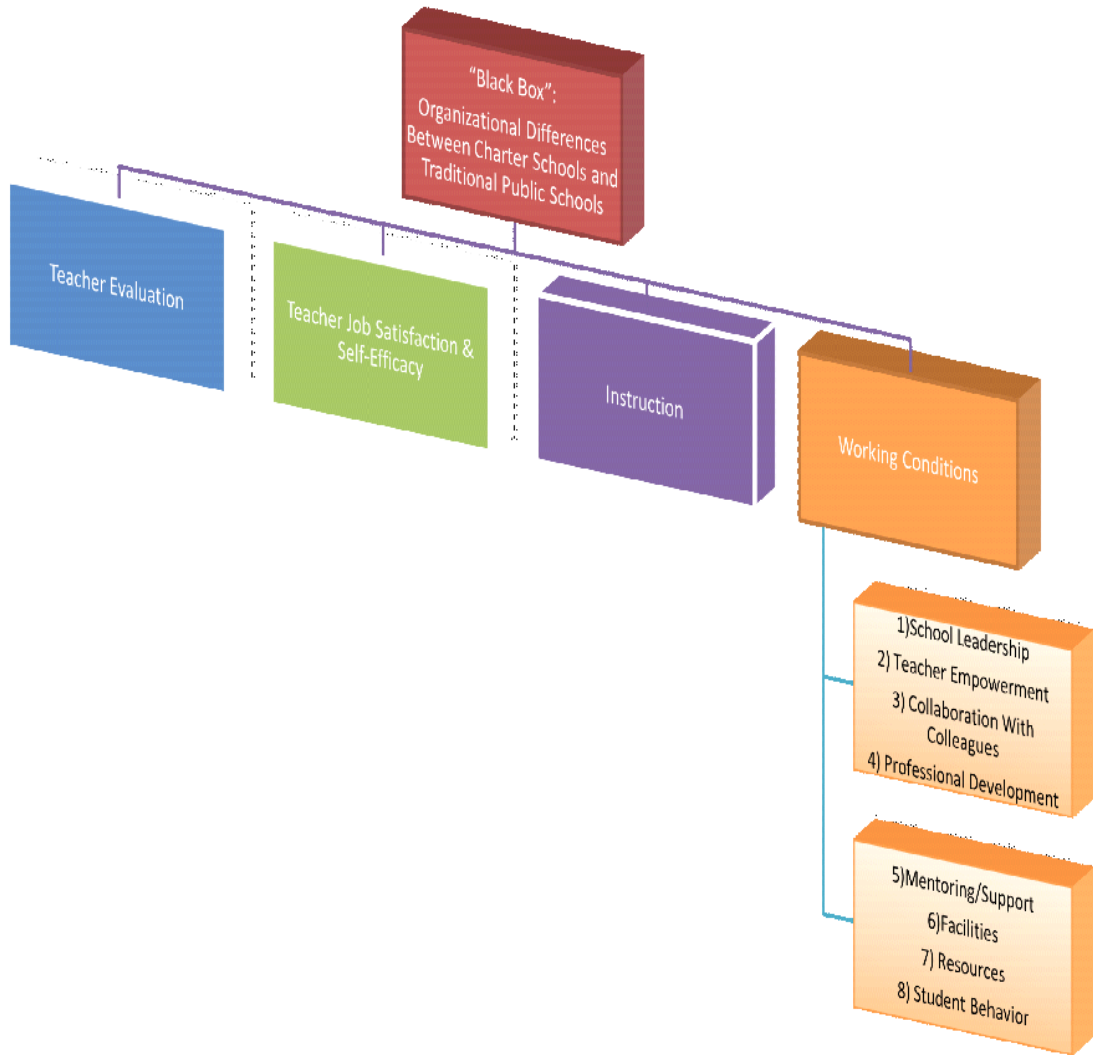
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# APPENDIX A

## Conceptual Framework



## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide

<b>Time of Interview</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Place</b>	
<b>Interviewee</b>	
<b>Interviewer</b>	

**Reminders to the Interviewee:**

- Purpose of the interview: is to investigate the work conditions and professional beliefs of 10-12 Southern California secondary (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school teachers who have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school to learn more about what constitutes an ideal work conditions for secondary teachers
- Intentions with data
- Responses are confidential
- Responses will be audio-recorded
- Responses will be physically and electronically sealed

<b>Questions:</b>
<p>1. Describe the working conditions you experienced in the traditional school setting in which you worked:</p> <p>-School Leadership   -Teacher Empowerment   -Mentoring/Support   -Facilities          -Resources   - Collaboration with Colleagues   -Student Behavior   -Professional Development</p>
<p>2. Describe the working conditions you experienced in the charter school setting in which you worked:</p> <p>-School Leadership   -Teacher Empowerment   -Mentoring/Support   -Collaboration with Colleagues          -Resources   - Facilities   -Student Behavior   -Professional Development</p>
<p>3. How did the working conditions you experienced in the charter and traditional school settings compare?</p>
<p>4. What do you believe constitute the ideal working conditions in schools, charter and traditional, to promote teacher retention, teacher satisfaction, and support quality teacher performance?</p>

## APPENDIX C

### IRB Approval Letter



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: March 07, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Coriandre Crane

Protocol #: 17-01-486

Project Title: A Qualitative Study on the Preferred Working Environment of Southern California Secondary Teachers With Experience in Both a District Traditional School and a District Charter School

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Coriandre Crane:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

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APPENDIX D

IRB Training - CTI

**COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)**  
**COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2**  
**COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS\***

\* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

• **Name:** CoriAndre Crane (ID: 6025132)  
• **Email:** coriandre.crane@pepperdine.edu  
• **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)  
• **Institution Unit:** ELAP  
• **Phone:** [REDACTED]

• **Curriculum Group:** CITI Conflicts of Interest  
• **Course Learner Group:** Conflicts of Interest  
• **Stage:** Stage 1 - Stage 1

• **Report ID:** 21801498  
• **Completion Date:** 02-Jan-2017  
• **Expiration Date:** 01-Jan-2021  
• **Minimum Passing:** 80  
• **Reported Score\*:** 80

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
CITI Conflict of Interest Course - Introduction (COI-Basic) (ID: 15177)	02-Jan-2017	No Quiz
Financial Conflicts of Interest: Overview, Investigator Responsibilities, and COI Rules (COI-Basic) (ID: 15070)	02-Jan-2017	4/5 (80%)
Institutional Responsibilities as They Affect Investigators (COI-Basic) (ID: 15072)	02-Jan-2017	4/5 (80%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: [www.citi-program.org/verify/2f5dfb6086-04de-4442-a7e7-5f9a8580f14e-21801498](http://www.citi-program.org/verify/2f5dfb6086-04de-4442-a7e7-5f9a8580f14e-21801498)

**CITI Program**  
Email: [support@citi-program.org](mailto:support@citi-program.org)  
Phone: 888-529-5929  
Web: <https://www.citi-program.org>



## COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

### COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2 COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT\*\*

\*\* NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** CoriAndre Crane (ID: 6025132)
- **Email:** coriandre.crane@pepperdine.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** ELAP
- **Phone:** [REDACTED]

- **Curriculum Group:** CITI Conflicts of Interest
- **Course Learner Group:** Conflicts of Interest
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Stage 1

- **Report ID:** 21801498
- **Report Date:** 02-Jan-2017
- **Current Score\*\*:** 80

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
CITI Conflict of Interest Course - Introduction (COI-Basic) (ID: 15177)	02-Jan-2017	No Quiz
Financial Conflicts of Interest: Overview, Investigator Responsibilities, and COI Rules (COI-Basic) (ID: 15070)	02-Jan-2017	4/5 (80%)
Institutional Responsibilities as They Affect Investigators (COI-Basic) (ID: 15072)	02-Jan-2017	4/5 (80%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k5dfb6086-04de-4f42-a7e7-5f9a8580f14e-21801498](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k5dfb6086-04de-4f42-a7e7-5f9a8580f14e-21801498)

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Email: [support@citiprogram.org](mailto:support@citiprogram.org)

Phone: 888-529-5929

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

## APPENDIX E

### Written Recruitment Script Template

Dear Participant X:

My name is CoriAndre Crane, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study examining work conditions and professional beliefs of 8-10 Southern California secondary (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school teachers who have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience to learn more about what constitutes an ideal work conditions for secondary teachers and you are invited to participate in the study. If you agree, you are invited to participate in an in-depth audio-recorded individual interview where you will be asked four open ended questions related to working conditions and professional beliefs. Each participant will be given two hours to answer all questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary where participants can withdraw at anytime. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. I will develop a user-friendly matrix where participants are assigned generic names to protect their identity and data.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me via phone at (562)-xxx-xxxx or via email at coriandre.crane@pepperdine.edu.

Thank you for your participation,  
CoriAndre Crane M.Ed& MPPM  
Pepperdine University  
Ed.D Candidate-Educational Leadership, Administration, & Policy (Pepperdine University)

## APPENDIX F

### Adult Informed Consent Form

## PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

*A Qualitative Study on the Preferred Working Environment of Southern California  
Secondary Teachers With Experience in Both a District Traditional School and a  
District Charter School*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by CoriAndre Crane at Pepperdine University because you have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read this document. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the work conditions and professional beliefs of 8-10 Southern California secondary (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school teachers who have two years of teaching experience in the same content area or grade level in both a public school and a district charter school with at least five years of consecutive full-time teaching experience to learn more about what constitutes ideal working conditions for secondary teachers.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer five open-ended, unstructured questions related to previous, current, and ideal working conditions in Southern California secondary schools. Each participant will be given one hour to answer all open ended unstructured questions. Participants will be audio-recorded. Participants must agree to be audio-recorded in order to participate in the study.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include the possibility of rekindling emotionally charged memories from either their previous or current work settings.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include learning more about working conditions of Southern California secondary teachers in district traditional and district charter settings. This study might also provide new information about secondary classroom teacher realities, challenges, and how realities and challenges influence teacher satisfaction, retention, and teacher quality.

### **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will receive a \$5 Starbucks gift card for your time. You do not have to answer all of the questions in order to receive the card. The card will be given to you when you return the questionnaire.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law.

However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse.

Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

Data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigators place of residence. Data will be stored for a minimum of three years. Data will also be released for transcription where pseudonym names assigned to protect the identities of participants. Lastly, audio-tapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable.

### **EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY**

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury.

### **INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact CoriAndre Crane at coriandre.crane@pepperdine.edu and that I may also contact Dr. Linda

Purrington at linda.purrington@pepperdine.edu if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

APPENDIX G

Interview Schedule & Budget

	S u n	M o n	T u e s	W e d	T h u r	F r i	S a t
<b>Week #1</b>  4-5 <i>Interviews</i>  (Convenience Sample)							
<b>Week #2</b>  4-5 <i>Interviews</i>  (Snowball Effect Sample)							
<b>Week #3</b>  3-4 <i>Interviews</i>  (MAKE-UP)							
<b>Week # 4</b>  EXTERN AL DATA TRANSC RIPTION							

\*Interviews will take place at a location and time that is convenient for the interviewee

\*Interviewees will be compensated with \$5 gift cards

\*Week #1-Week #3: DATA COLLECTION

\*Week #4: EXTERNAL DATA TRANSCRIPTION

APPENDIX H

Data Analysis Code Book-Based on 8 Working Conditions Variables

Variable Name	Variable Codes
1. Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Overall school leadership (L-OSL)</li> <li>-Distributed school leadership (L-DSL)</li> <li>-Opportunities to influence school decisions (L-OISD)</li> <li>-Communicates goals and expectations (L-CGE)</li> <li>-Supports teachers with resources, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration (L-ST)</li> <li>-Creates productive and harmonious working relationships (L-CHR)</li> </ul>
2. Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Supported by colleagues (C-SC)</li> <li>-Included in the school community (C-ISC)</li> <li>-Frequency in which they meet to discuss instruction (C-FMDI)</li> <li>-Promote positive school environment (C-PPSE)</li> </ul>
3. Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of teaching materials (F-LTM)</li> </ul>
4. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Technology (R-T)</li> <li>-Instructional materials (R-IM)</li> <li>-Classroom supplies (R-CS)</li> </ul>
5. Support/Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Supported by their colleagues (SM-SC)</li> <li>-Included in the school community (SM-ISC)</li> </ul>
6. Student Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Teacher's responsiveness to student differences (SB-TRSD)</li> <li>-Student engagement (SB-SE)</li> <li>-Homework completion (SB-HC)</li> </ul>
7. Teacher Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Teacher's ability to advocate for themselves (TE-TAAT)</li> <li>-Teacher's ability to advocate for their students (TE-TAAS)</li> <li>-Teacher's ability to advocate for others (TE-TAAO)</li> <li>-Teachers believe they are able to provide high quality instruction (TE-TBPHQI)</li> <li>-Teachers use data to modify instruction (TE-TUDMI)</li> <li>-Extent to which teachers are satisfied with the teaching profession (TE-ETSTP)</li> <li>-Extent to which teachers are satisfied with school leadership (TE-ETSSL)</li> <li>-Extent to which teachers are satisfied with the school environment (TE-ETSSE)</li> <li>-Teacher evaluations are fair and clearly communicated (TE-</li> </ul>

Variable Name	Variable Codes
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TEFCC)</b>            -Teachers are given formative feedback (<b>TE-TGFF)</b></p>
8. Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Teacher's ability to access professional developments (<b>PD-TAAPD)</b></li> <li>-Teacher's ability to participate in high quality professional developments (<b>PD-TAPHQPD)</b></li> <li>-Teacher's ability to participate in professional development during the school day (<b>PD-TAPPDDSD)</b></li> <li>-Teacher's ability to collaborate with teachers from other schools (<b>PD-TBCTFOS)</b></li> <li>-Teacher's ability to reflect on their professional development plan with school leadership(<b>PD-TARPDPSL)</b></li> <li>-Teachers who participate in content-specific professional development (<b>PD-TPCSPD)</b></li> </ul>