“You Can’t Control Me!” Cultivating Authority in a Struggling Urban High School

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Background/Context: *Current research on urban school reform has stressed the importance of strong student–teacher relationships in creating engaging learning environments for students. This article contributes to this growing literature by showing the challenges and possibilities as teachers tried to reclaim authority and cultivate strong student–teacher relationships after a violent teacher assault and subsequent reform efforts stripped them of the remaining vestiges of their institutional authority.*

Focus of Study: *This research examines seven classrooms at an urban, comprehensive high school one year after a teacher attack occurred at the school. Drawing on various theories about power and authority in schools, I argue that Weber’s distinction between power and authority is critical for teachers who work in schools that are struggling with similar circumstances. In doing so, I show that the degree to which these different approaches created engaging learning environments and restored meaningful teacher–student relationships depended on the type of authority structures that the teachers used.*

Research Design: *Qualitative, ethnographic methods were used to explore and analyze the various approaches that teachers used in their classrooms to restore order and reclaim their authority. Purposive sampling was used to represent the range of approaches that teachers used. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers and youth were conducted on a regular basis during the yearlong study. Observations and interviews were coded and analyzed to understand the benefits and limitations of the various approaches that teachers used in their classrooms.*

Findings/Results: *I describe and analyze seven approaches that I witnessed during my observations at Washington High School. The first three approaches illustrate teachers who relied on power, instead of authority, to control their classrooms. These teachers fall into the following categories: abdicated power, autocratic power, and relinquished power. The next three approaches depict teachers who tried to cultivate authority, yet failed because students*

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did not recognize their authority as legitimate. I refer to these as thwarted authority, partitioned authority, and goal-oriented authority. In contrast, the last example, apprenticed authority, describes a teacher who used legitimate authority to control his classroom. This example suggests that if the students genuinely recognize the teacher's authority as legitimate, then the classroom will become a meaningful learning environment for students despite the overwhelming challenges at this school.

***Conclusions/Recommendations**: The findings from this study suggest that many of these approaches failed to generate the authority necessary to restore relational trust and student engagement. However, the one teacher who used what I called apprenticed authority created an engaging classroom environment by providing his students with real, but limited, forms of authority in his classroom. Focusing on the relationship between teachers and students, this study provides scholars and practitioners with a way to understand how Weber's distinction between power and authority is critical for educators who wish to find a way to create authority in institutions, like this struggling high school, where they have lost the institutional authority that teachers normally possess.*

> The empathetic stance is a crucial ingredient of successful interactions between teachers and students. Empathy is not adversarial; it does not accentuate distinctions of power; and it seems to be an expression of fearlessness. . . . Teacher fearlessness not only comes from a deep understanding of students, it also derives from institutional authority that supports their individual encounters with students. The most explicit and visible signs of strong institutional authority are seen in the schools' response to violence and other disciplinary matters.

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot
The Good High School, 1983, p. 345

A few years ago, newspaper headlines featured Washington High School,[1] an urban comprehensive high school, because two students assaulted a teacher after he reprimanded them for breaking a school policy. Several days later, in accordance with district policy regarding assaults, these students were arrested and expelled from the school. This was not the first violent incident that occurred in the school against a teacher or a student during that year. In fact, one could safely say that the school community had become accustomed to a certain level of violence. However, the severity of this particular teacher's injuries turned this incident into a media frenzy. Several local newspapers covered the incident, and the victim appeared on various local radio and television stations to explain what had happened. Even though the teacher publicly forgave the students who attacked him, he vigorously advocated for new policies regarding attacks and demanded increased security measures in the school district.

The outpouring of media attention brought a new sense of awareness to the number of assaults on teachers and students in the school district, and it launched a citywide discussion about the escalation of school violence throughout the city.

As the media coverage mounted and taxpayers complained, school district officials recognized that they needed to address the challenges at the school, so they appointed district-level officials to work in the school with the hope that these individuals could effectively alleviate the tensions and fear that paralyzed many in the school. Within a few weeks, these district-level officials left the school, believing that they had effectively dealt with the crisis. The citywide conversations subsided. Increasingly, teachers feared that they might become the next victims if they reprimanded their students. To avoid this, they retreated to their classrooms and relinquished the remaining vestiges of their institutional authority as adults in the school. This action ushered in an ethos of intense suspicion among students and newfound fragmentation among teachers. Classroom order eroded; the corridors erupted. As the situation worsened and the teachers' anxiety increased, the staff frantically sought alternative ways to maintain control.[2]

Several weeks after the attack occurred, the school district hired a new principal to manage and, hopefully, reform Washington High School. This article explains and analyzes the alternative management schemes teachers used at Washington High School to reclaim their authority under the new principal. As we will see, many of these alternatives failed to restore the authority necessary to create engaging, even civilized, classroom environments. However, in the midst of the challenges, one teacher devised an effective way to exert authority, overcome seemingly insurmountable odds, and create a caring, deeply engaged classroom community deliberately aimed to increase student motivation and achievement. I refer to this teacher's approach as *apprenticed authority* to demonstrate the importance of giving students real, but limited, power and authority in the classroom, which, in turn, legitimizes the teacher's authority.

By concentrating on the relationship between teachers and students, this work suggests that Max Weber's theories on the differences between power and authority might be a useful tool for teachers who are searching for ways to restore order and create meaningful relationships with the youth in schools that face similar challenges.

CURRENT LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Even though research shows that the levels of school violence have dropped dramatically over the past decade, educators and scholars are

still concerned with the level of violent incidents that occur in our nation's public schools (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012).

Over the past decade, educators and policymakers have responded to urban school violence by increasing the level of surveillance in the school buildings by using metal detectors, additional police, and zero-tolerance policies. Many argue that the introduction of these new policies and systems has led to the creation of a school-to-prison pipeline that moves students, particularly low-income students of color, from our nation's urban schools to its ever-expanding prison complex (Alexander, 2010; Casella, 2003; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

As these policies changed, educational researchers have examined a variety of factors that have contributed to the persistence of school violence and the overwhelming failures of urban, comprehensive high schools. These studies argue that external factors, such as gang violence, persistent unemployment, and increasing poverty, are the primary impediments to educational progress (Anyon, 2005; Kantor & Brenzel, 1992; Noguera, 2003). By focusing primarily on factors that schools cannot control to explain the failures of urban schools, these studies seem to suggest that educational institutions inherited, rather than contributed to, their current problems. Schools cannot manage the level of poverty or gang violence that persists on the streets, and as other scholars point out, schools are often still sites where these challenges are resisted and reinforced (Fine & Weis, 2003; Neckerman, 2007; Rose, 2005). This study contributes to this body of scholarship by deliberately looking inside the school to examine the various approaches that teachers used to restore authority in a school that has been plagued by violence for decades.

In addition to this work, there is also a body of scholarship that emphasizes the importance of strong leadership to help failing schools transform into sites of student engagement and achievement (Elmore, 2000; Louis & Miles, 1990). At Washington High School, school district officials recognized the connection between a strong leader and successful school reform, and so, after the teacher attack, the school district hired an individual to lead the school who had a proven track record of implementing reform and increasing achievement at other schools. There is no doubt that principals are critical to robust school reform. However, often this scholarship fails to recognize that many urban high schools, like Washington, have had new principals come and go on a regular basis. Washington High School, in fact, has had seven principals in eight years. This constant circulation of principals and district-level reforms created distrust and skepticism among the teachers. Instead of seeing this new principal as an instructional leader who wanted to reform the school, many of the teachers viewed this new principal as one more

top-down reform that would come and go by the end of the year. For them, his presence did not have the impact that the district had hoped it might have when it hired him (Hess, 1998; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). As a result, this study illustrates the limitations of leadership, even individuals who have been successful elsewhere, in schools that have experienced the levels of violence that plagued Washington High School.

The erosion of authority, engagement, and legitimacy at Washington High School did not happen the moment the two students assaulted their teacher. Rather, it occurred gradually over the course of the twentieth century, and now, teachers at Washington High School are coping with the consequences of policies that individuals made decades ago (Arum, 2005; Fairclough, 2007; Hurn, 1985). These teachers did not think that the teacher attack changed the climate at the school much; rather, it simply launched a citywide discussion about the violence that had plagued the school and its community for decades. Washington High School teachers, like several educational researchers, doubted that this new leader alone had the power to transform the multitude of factors that led to the erosion of legitimacy and authority at Washington High School and its community (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Grant, 2009; Neckerman, 2007; Payne, 2008). They wanted their school and classrooms to change, but struggled to find a way to make that happen. The majority of Washington High School teachers wanted to create strong student–teacher relationships and cultivate engaging learning environments for their students, but struggled to find a way to realize their aim (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Bryk et al., 2010; Neckerman, 2007; Noddings, 2003).

Using Weber's theories of power and authority, this study contributes to these bodies of literature by showing the various approaches that teachers used to restore their authority and cultivate relational trust in their classrooms in a school following the turmoil and challenges that they experienced. Weber argues that power refers to the possibility that one person in a relationship can force others, despite resistance, to follow his or her own will. Authority exists when individuals in power prove that they have a *right* to a position of authority, and more importantly, that they can convince others that they have earned this right. Max Weber writes, "the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a *belief,* a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige" (Weber, 1968, p. 263, cited in Weber, 2005). According to Weber, authority is legitimate when individuals voluntarily obey individuals in positions of authority; the idea that compliance is voluntary and legitimate distinguishes power from authority (Weber, 2005). While this distinction may seem minor, Weber's ideas have powerful

implications for educational practice and urban school reform, for his theory illustrates the ways in which power and authority are constructed in relationships between teachers and students (Goodman, 2010; Metz, 1978; Swidler, 1979). Using his theories, this study offers scholars and practitioners insights about the importance of the distinction between power and authority in creating authentic, legitimate authority structures that enhance relational trust and, in turn, student engagement in our nation's urban schools.

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL: FIELDWORK AND METHODS

The qualitative data presented in this article were collected in a yearlong study of Washington High School. I gathered this data during classroom observations and semistructured interviews with teachers and students during the academic year following the teacher attack. Typically, I spent two days a week, approximately 70 days, at the school as a participant observer. I arrived at the beginning of the school day (8:00 a.m.) and left after the students were dismissed (4:00 p.m.). During the day, I participated in a wide array of school activities. I spent approximately 40% of my time walking the hallways with administrators, police officers, and support staff; 35% of my time attending faculty and community meetings; and 25% of my time observing classroom practice. Thus, I spent approximately 140 hours conducting classroom observations during the study.

When I decided to start this research at Washington High School, I had not originally intended to study teacher authority. Initially, I wanted to study how a principal transformed a failing school into a thriving learning community for his staff and students. I knew the principal who had been assigned to Washington High School following the attack and asked him if I could spend the year documenting and analyzing his practice. He agreed, and thus, I spent the first month of my time at the school solely with him—walking the hallways, attending staff meetings, and observing classrooms. He told the students and teachers that I was there to conduct research during faculty meetings, grade level meetings, and casual conversations. As I spent more time in this school, I realized that many teachers were still living in the past—the events of the previous year had paralyzed them. It seemed to me that this needed to change for his reforms to have any impact. The longer I stayed at the school, the more I realized that I needed to alter my initial questions.

As I watched teacher after teacher try to work in this difficult system, there were days that authentic school reform and student engagement seemed impossible. However, students routinely told me that there were teachers who were engaging despite the chaos and confusion at the

school. So, instead of surrendering to my ever-increasing feeling that reform at this school seemed insurmountable, I decided to examine the different strategies and tactics that teachers used as they desperately searched for ways to reclaim authority in their classrooms. My research questions were the following: *What approaches did teachers use to reclaim their authority during this year of reform and transition? What were the benefits and limitations of these approaches?* I chose this topic because it was increasingly clear to me, as I conducted my observations and interviews and analyzed my data, that while some of the teachers were still stuck in the past, others were searching for classroom management techniques aimed at cultivating authority in their daily practice.

In the first two months, I visited 17 classrooms with the principal. From those classrooms, I selected six classrooms to capture the range of classroom approaches. In my observations and conversations, teacher experience, race, and gender did not seem to play an important role in the various approaches that teachers used or the reactions that the students had. During the year, I witnessed White teachers and teachers of color using these approaches to varying degrees. The students, who had lived in a hyper-segregated community, often dismissed my questions about racism, arguing that their teachers were not racist. Their teachers, they insisted, simply treated their peers differently because some students had more behavioral or academic problems than others. In a school that was 98% African American, race and racism were difficult for these youth to see, at least in their school. I am not suggesting that a teacher's race, class, and gender identity has no impact on his or her teaching; however, I did not see any evidence of this during my observations or interviews. Thus, I randomly selected the first six teachers in this study. In February, at the suggestion of the principal, I added another teacher, Mr. Butler, to the study.

When I began the study, I assumed that I would use traditional ethnographic methods—writing fieldnotes on classroom observations and conducting individual interviews with the teachers on their practice (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I observed the seven teachers in this study several times a week in their classrooms and discussed their practice with them in semistructured interviews. In addition, I interviewed students to understand their perspectives on the various approaches that the teachers used. As I conducted the research and analyzed the data, I augmented these ethnographic methods with Eisner's theory of educational connoisseurship and criticism (Eisner, 1974, 1998).

Eisner describes educational connoisseurship as one's ability "to notice or experience the significant and often subtle qualities that constitute an

act, work, or object" and "relate these to the contextual and antecedent conditions" (Eisner, 1998, p. 85). Eisner's methods provided me with a way to delve more deeply into my data during the analysis phase of the study. His notion of connoisseurship helped me look for inconsistencies and similarities among the classrooms that I observed and the interviews that I conducted. Eisner defines criticism as "the art of disclosure" and "reconstruction" of the data collected throughout connoisseurship in "the form of a narrative" (Eisner, 1998, p. 86). Eisner's methods helped me as I revised my research question and I analyzed my data. As a connoisseur, I used Eisner's approach to notice the differences among the teachers that I observed and to generate questions about their work so that I could understand why these teachers relied on such diverse approaches. Moreover, I leveraged his methods to create questions for student interviews to investigate why they reacted to these approaches in different ways.

DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS

I developed a coding scheme to analyze data from classroom observations and semistructured interviews. The coding scheme drew on my theoretical framework as well as Eisner's insights. More specifically, in my fieldnotes, I analyzed the various components of authority—freedom, power, and legitimacy. First, I created a scale to analyze these components on four levels—none, minimal, moderate, and significant. This was a generic scale that applies to any social organization (see Table A1, Four-level scale, Appendix). From that scale, I created two scales designed specifically for this study: one to analyze classroom norms/sanctions (see Table A2, Classroom Norms and Sanctions, Appendix) and another to analyze classroom curriculum/ instruction (see Table A3, Classroom Curriculum and Instruction, Appendix). Using these scales, I coded my data, triangulated these results with observational and interview data, and classified the seven classrooms that I observed into distinct typologies (see Appendix for examples of coded data). This method provided me with a way to minimize observational bias and to see the similarities and differences in the seven typologies (see Table 1, Classroom Typologies, below). Even though the vignettes in this paper are classified under different typologies, as the appendix demonstrates, in some cases, teachers shared certain elements.

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL: CULTURE AND CONTEXT AFTER THE TEACHER ATTACK

Washington High School is located in an urban school district on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area. The school was built at the turn

Table 1. Classroom Typologies: Levels of Freedom, Power, and Authority and Teacher's Race, Gender, and Experience Levels[1]

	Abdicated Power White Male, Experienced	**Autocratic Power** White Female, Experienced	**Relinquished Power** White Female, Experienced	**Thwarted Authority** Black Male and White Female, New	**Partitioned Authority** White Male and Black Male, Experienced	**Goal-Oriented Authority** Black Female, Experienced	**Apprenticed Authority** Asian Male, Experienced
Norms and Sanctions (Power)	None	Significant	None (relies on police)	Minimal	Significant (in the classroom); None (outside of the classroom)	Moderate	Moderate
Norms and Sanctions (Freedom)	None	None	None	Significant	Minimal (in the classroom); None (outside of the classroom)	Moderate	Significant
Norms and Sanctions (Authority)	None	Minimal	None	Minimal	Moderate (in the classroom); None (outside of the classroom)	Moderate	Significant
Instruction and Curriculum (Power)[2]	Significant	Unknown	None	Minimal	Unknown	Significant	Minimal
Instruction and Curriculum (Freedom)[2]	None	Unknown	None	Significant	Unknown	Minimal	Significant
Instruction and Curriculum (Authority)[2]	None	Unknown	None	Minimal	Unknown	Moderate	Significant

1. One of the blind reviewers raised the issue of race during the review process. I understand these concerns and admit that this is a shortcoming of this study. However, I never asked the teachers about how their race (or gender or experience level) shaped their teaching practice and, as I stated in the body of the paper, I could have just as easily selected a teacher of color in the typologies with a White teacher and vice versa. Similarly, men and women and new and experienced teachers moved across the spectrum of authority structures that I saw during the yearlong study. I am not arguing that a teacher's race, gender, class, and experience level do not influence their approach to teaching; however, I did not focus on this or see any evidence of this in my data. That said, I have shared the race, gender, and experience level of the teachers in this study so that this is clear to the readers. New teachers have less than five years of teaching experience; experienced teachers have five or more years of teaching experience.

2. The observations described in this paper under autocratic power and partitioned authority occurred during noninstructional periods, thus there was no instructional/curricular analysis.

of the twentieth century to hold several thousand students. By the 2009–2010 school year, the enrollment had dwindled to approximately 1,000 students, leaving much of the building empty. Demographic data indicate that the student population is 98% African American; 83% of the student body qualifies for the federally funded lunch programs for individuals living at or below the poverty line. Results from a state-mandated test indicate that only 14% of Washington High School 11th graders read at the advanced or proficient level; 20% read at the basic level; and 66% read below the basic level. Likewise in math, only 8% scored at the advanced or proficient level; 15% scored at the basic level; and 79% scored below the basic level.

Like many other urban schools, incidents of violence and weak leadership have plagued the institution for several decades. A police officer who attended the school in the mid-1970s recalled that the violence was so dire during her time at Washington as a student that the school closed before lunch each day (Police Officer 1, interview, March 7). School administrators decided it was simply safer to dismiss the students early and let the violence spill out into the city streets, rather than risk chaos and disorder in the cafeteria. According to a former teacher, this policy continued well into the mid-1980s (Teacher 4, interview, November 26).

The year before the teacher attack happened, there were 22 reported assaults on students, 6 reported assaults on teachers or administrators, and 4 reported assaults on other employees. One teacher remarked that she witnessed students rip fluorescent lights out of their sockets and hurl them at their peers. When substitutes came, it was routine practice for the students to open windows and throw several sets of classroom books out of the windows. Students even “trashed” classrooms, “breaking computer screens, flipping desks, and throwing papers.” When teachers returned to their classrooms, administrators simply expected them to clean up the mess and reconfigure their classrooms on their own (Teacher 1, interview, February 11).

Teachers argued that weak school leadership compounded these challenges because the administrators did not enforce the rules and norms of the school (Teacher 2, interview, October 1). Several teachers explained that it was more common for administrators to reprimand teachers for minor infractions, such as not turning their attendance sheets in on time or not submitting their weekly lesson plans, than to reprimand students engaged in destructive and violent behaviors. One teacher told me in exasperation, “the kids could do whatever they wanted and there were no consequences for them; the only consequences were for teachers” (Teacher 1, interview, February 11).

The teachers rarely exercised authority because there were no agreed upon legitimized school-wide norms. As one teacher recalled, "Students were unwilling to listen; when you asked a child to move, they didn't . . . I was hit twice in the halls by students who did not want to cooperate when I asked them to go to class" (Teacher 1, interview, February 11). The teachers banded together to help one another cope with their fear. As they did this, the students recognized that some of their teachers feared what might happen in the school. When I asked a student to describe the school following the incident, she told me that "some of the teachers were scared. . . . I know that." She remembered that students took advantage of the situation. For example, she recalled several times when students who "didn't belong in my classroom . . . would come in . . . anyways. The teacher would ask them to leave, and they would threaten the teachers that they were going to jump them, just little stuff to scare the teachers and threaten them, like, I'll hit you. I didn't like it [the school] at all" (Student 1, interview, January 3).

The school was a world where children, not adults, governed the practices and routines in the building. To protect themselves from the violence and confusion, teachers retreated and hid in their classrooms. As one teacher told me, "You locked yourself in your room," just to forget about the anarchy that lingered outside (Teacher 5, interview, October 31). These men and women worked in extreme isolation. Their classrooms, in effect, became their "bunker" (Teacher 3, interview, September 17). Many teachers reasoned that it was simply safer to remain detached from a situation that felt completely out of their control. Yet, amid all the fear and anxiety, teachers continued coming to school so that their colleagues and their students would not have to face these challenges alone (Teacher 2, interview, October 1; Fieldnotes, April 20).

In this article, I describe and analyze seven approaches that I witnessed during my observations at Washington High School. This article deliberately looks inside the school to understand the challenges and possibilities that teachers faced as they tried to cultivate authority in their classrooms. The first three approaches illustrate teachers who used power, instead of authority, to control their classrooms. These teachers fall into the following categories: *abdicated power*, *autocratic power*, and *relinquished power.* As these examples demonstrate, the use of power without the legitimization required of authority further distanced the students from the teachers and the school. The next three approaches depict teachers who tried to cultivate authority, yet failed because students did not recognize their authority as legitimate. I refer to these as *thwarted authority*, *partitioned authority*, and *goal-oriented authority*. In contrast, the last example, *apprenticed authority*, describes a teacher who gave his students real, but

limited, forms of authority, which in turn, made his authority legitimate. This example suggests that if the students genuinely recognize the teacher's authority as legitimate and have a stake in their education, then the classroom will become a meaningful learning environment for students despite the overwhelming challenges at this school.

ABDICATED POWER

While it was rare, there were a few teachers at Washington High School who quickly decided that it was impossible to have any control in their classrooms. Instead of setting boundaries and establishing classroom rules, these teachers simply abdicated their responsibility to manage the classroom and allowed the students to do whatever they pleased. These teachers never tried to establish power in their classroom. I refer to this approach as *abdicated power*. When teachers did this, either the students would assume power and forcefully manage classroom behavior or the classroom would turn into a place where anarchy and chaos prevailed (Becker, 1953; Silberman, 1971; Waller, 1967). At times, both would happen.

In my time at Washington, the principal always worried about these classrooms, and he would routinely check on them to monitor the situation. His main concern was that when these classrooms erupted, which they often did, the chaos typically spilled over to the corridors when students moved to their next class. For example, one day we were walking through the hallways to make sure that students were in their classrooms, and suddenly, we heard a piercing noise coming from Room 216 (Fieldnotes, April 11). When we walked in, we noticed the teacher quietly sitting at his desk. The students, on the other hand, were dancing around the room, throwing erasers and chalk. Interestingly, as soon as the principal entered the room, without saying anything, the students immediately stopped engaging in this inappropriate behavior. Within seconds, the teacher told the principal that he could not control the class; the principal calmly told him that he would stay to see what was happening and offer him some assistance.

The principal sat down in an empty seat next to one of the students, and I decided to do the same. When I took my seat, I recognized the African American male student who was seated next to me. Some of the teachers had told me about his exceptional ability; others had only commented on his atrocious behavior. Without any prompting, he angrily turned to me and said, "This guy never teaches us anything. He wasn't doing anything until you walked into the room." He was speaking loudly enough for everyone to hear what he was saying. I quietly told him to

write down the lesson notes that the teacher was writing on the board. Once again, the student looked at me and said, “You don’t know what he was saying about us before you came in here. He was calling us stupid and worthless.” Then, he looked directly at the teacher and shouted, “Isn’t that right, weren’t you calling us stupid and worthless?” The teacher did not respond. Then, the student shouted, “You can’t control me! You don’t do anything for us. We came here to get an education, and all you ever do is sit in your seat!” I tried to calm this student down, and told him that I believed what he was saying, but that unfortunately, screaming at the teacher would not benefit him. He looked at me and started writing down the notes from the chalkboard.

As the teacher started his lesson about Spanish verbs, it was clear that he had prepared absolutely nothing for the students that day. The principal knew it. I knew it. And, more importantly, the students knew it (Student 4, interview; Fieldnotes, April 11). It was clear that the teacher never prepared lesson plans, and the principal knew that this teacher usually sat at his seat and simply waited for the bell to ring to indicate the class change. He did not engage with the students, and thus, one could say he simply abdicated his responsibility to teach the students and to control the classroom. This presents several challenges. Once a teacher abdicates his or her power, it is virtually impossible to regain it (Arendt, 1969; Davies, 2004; Hemmings, 2003; Metz, 1978; Pace & Hemmings, 2006). These classrooms deteriorate into places where chaos prevails and learning rarely happens. This situation is not only dangerous, it is also incredibly frustrating to youth who come to Washington High School each day in the hopes of receiving an education that actually prepares them for their future. As one African American female student told me, “What I don’t like about high school is when I come to school and I don’t learn anything. . . . The teachers don’t actually teach. . . . There is no motivation” (Student 3, interview, December 7). At times, the students’ violent behavior and verbal outbursts represented a form of resistance against teachers who refused to teach the youth the skills that they need in their future (Fine & Weis, 2003; Foucault, 1982). They refused to comply with the teacher’s directives; the teacher lacked legitimacy. Since he lacked legitimacy, this teacher wielded power, not authority, and in this chaotic institution, the students refused to obey his commands (Weber, 2005).

AUTOCRATIC POWER

During the study, several teachers indicated they were anxious and concerned that students were still looking for opportunities to misbehave. Violence and chaos, they argued, had existed in the building for several

years, and the arrival of a new administration did not guarantee that the school's problems would disappear. The teachers were simply not ready to trust the new principal or their students, and they routinely warned me of the dangers of doing so (Teacher 1, interview, February 11; Teacher 2, interview, October, 1; Fieldnotes, November 9, November 19). To ensure their own safety and their students' safety, teachers used their own power, as adults, to anticipate and squash any behavior that might lead to a disciplinary problem. The student's intent was irrelevant to the teacher's decision to reprimand his or her behavior; the only thing that mattered was that the student's behavior could cause problems. Borrowing from Weber (2005), I refer to this approach as *autocratic power*.

One of the teachers at Washington High School decided to sponsor a Day of Respect before spring break. According to a letter drafted by her students, the day would teach the community about "respecting one another . . . hopefully, it will knock some sense into people and make them think twice before they do anything stupid" (Letter Day of Respect, February 10). The students would attend workshops throughout the Day of Respect to discuss ways to curb violence and the student organizers asked teachers and community members for workshops that would appeal to the students. I was working with two students on a senior project on Emmett Till and asked them if they would like to conduct a teach-in at the Day of Respect. They agreed.

When the Day of Respect finally arrived, I met my students before school to help them prepare for their presentation. One of the community volunteers walked into the room and asked if I could help her print out a document from her flash drive. She explained that she needed it for her presentation. I told her that unfortunately, this was not my classroom and that I did not know the password to the teacher's computer. I asked the other students in the room if anyone knew the password. One of the young men in the back of the room volunteered to help—he explained that he was a member of the technology club and knew the password to access this computer. I moved out of the way so that he could sit down on the chair near the computer, and as he did this, another Washington teacher walked in and immediately reprimanded him screaming, "Dashawn, you know that you cannot be behind the teacher's desk." Horrified at the tone she had used, I explained that I had given him permission to sit there and that he was trying to help us. She turned and reminded me, "At Washington High School, we never let students behind a teacher's desk. You never know what could happen" (Fieldnotes, March 15). By the time that she had finished saying this, Dashawn had already walked back to his seat and sunk in his chair.

While many accounts of urban schools describe teachers who act this way, teachers at Washington High School rarely practiced autocratic power. And for good reason. Legitimate authority rests on the subordinate's willing recognition and compliance with the disciplinary approach (Weber, 2005). It is highly unlikely that any student would willingly uphold a disciplinary approach where teachers quickly suppress any action that *might* lead to disorder. This approach does not require that the student recognize the teacher's role; in this case, Dashawn is supposed to comply with whatever she says. Thus, this type of classroom approach in not based on authority; it is simply power. This presents several challenges. First, in this example, the student did not challenge the teacher's actions; perhaps he thought he would not win the argument or perhaps it was not worth arguing. Yet, in many cases, it seems reasonable that students might try to challenge a teacher's attempt to quell behavior in this way—particularly when the students were acting appropriately. Moreover, autocratic power does not instill students with a sense of what is and what is not appropriate because teachers reprimand students based on their perception of what happened rather than school-wide norms; therefore, it is impossible for students to recognize what is and is not appropriate in the school. In short, autocratic power is ineffective because it lacks the legitimacy that authority requires, and instead rests solely on the teacher's use of power (Weber, 2005).

RELINQUISHED POWER

This type of classroom approach describes those teachers at Washington High School who attempted to use another individual's power, such as an administrator or police officer, to control their classrooms. Students understand the weaknesses of this power, and when they test its limits, the teachers *relinquish* this power to the students. When this happens, students have complete control over the classroom environment, and teachers fade into the background. In short, the teachers have relinquished their role in controlling the students. However, instead of completely abdicating control of the situation as the teachers did in the abdicated power example, these teachers substitute police power for their own authority.

In my observations at Washington, teachers felt the need to constantly remind me that their students have a proven history of retaliating against teachers who reprimand their behavior. They wanted me, as the outsider, to know this. When I reprimanded students who loitered in the hallways, often times, the teachers would remind me of the potential consequences. Many of the teachers thought of me as a young White woman who did

not understand, as one of them said, "what it's like to be in the trenches." After working with this teacher for several days, she warned me, "Erika, it's great that you want to help them [the students], but that puts you in danger of being attacked" (Teacher 5, interview, October 31). Their fear of another violent event paralyzed them and galvanized their fear that I, as a young White woman, did not understand the risks of being there. These constant warnings were a reminder that I needed to be careful of Washington youth. This fear pushed many teachers to approach their work tentatively and cautiously, alert to the possibilities of chaos and violence that happened in the past. Instead of attempting a forward-looking systematic effort to set up new authority approaches, these teachers lived each day recollecting past events, fearful of the harm that might befall them or a student if they used their authority to maintain control. When a situation seemed precarious, these teachers relinquished their power and relied on external authority figures, such as the school police, to squelch disorder and chaos in their classrooms.

Since the school lacks permanent substitute teachers, it is a common practice for teachers at Washington High School to serve as substitute teachers during what would otherwise be their preparation periods. A week before the Day of Respect, I had arranged to meet with a teacher during her preparation period to review her plans for the event. Although the teacher had to cover an Algebra I class during her preparation period, we still decided to meet to discuss the plans for the upcoming event (Fieldnotes, April 18).

As I walked down the dreary, empty hallway toward her classroom, I could hear music blaring from a radio and students screaming at one another. The sounds were clearly audible, and I could tell that they were coming from the direction of her classroom. When I walked into the room, there was a group of students gathered in the back of the room dancing to the blaring music. Some students were jumping on and off chairs; others were using a broom to play limbo. I recognized a few of the students from observations in other classrooms; however, I had never seen them acting like this. The sound was absolutely deafening. There was no teacher in sight, and the students took full advantage of this. I walked to the back of the room and asked one of the students to tell me where the teacher was. The student told me that she thought the teacher was in her office; however, she was not really sure where she was. Apparently, the teacher told the students to do what they wanted, and then hid alone in an adjacent room, which shared a door and window with the classroom.

I walked into the adjacent room and saw the teacher seated, working on her computer. She moved two chairs to the front of the classroom so that we could talk about the plans and watch the students. Once it

became clear that the noise was interfering with our ability to have a conversation, she yelled at the students in the back of the room shouting, "Hey animals, can you turn my stereo down? I am trying to have an adult conversation here." The students acknowledged her comment, but they did not change their behavior. The teacher yelled back again, asking the students to stop. Then, she turned to me and said, "Can you believe this? They act just like animals. No wonder no one stays at this school."

She had no legitimacy in this classroom, and thus, was trying to exert power over the students to maintain some semblance of control in the room, hoping that our presence might encourage them to stop (Weber, 2005). It did not work. So, she reprimanded the students again, and told them that if their behavior did not change, she would call the school police. She waited a few minutes. The students knew they were in control of the situation and continued to run around the room. In short, her pleas did nothing. When she realized these students were not going to change their behavior, she walked over to the phone and repeated her threat to call the police. In response, Daniel, an extremely vocal and, at times, defiant student turned the music even louder and started clapping his hands. Others joined him. She picked up the phone and started dialing. Daniel shouted, "You can't tell us what to do; you don't even know us!" His comments suggest that if the teacher knew them or at least respected them, then, perhaps, she could tell them what to do. However, rather than getting to know the students, she hid. From the students' perspective, they did not need to listen to her requests because she had not earned the right to tell them what to do.

Once she realized that the students were not willing to change their behaviors, she picked up the phone, called the police, described the chaos in her room, and asked for support. As she said this to the police, the classroom erupted. Daniel quickly organized a group to challenge the teacher, and they began throwing objects—pens, pencils, and notebooks. By threatening them with the police, she showed the students her willingness to relinquish her power and aroused their anger—her decision to use the school police as a means of restoring order only escalated the problems in her classroom. Once the police arrived, they followed protocol and removed the students from the room. It is not clear if they arrested them or simply brought them to the police headquarters on the first floor of the building. The teacher did not seem to care as long as the chaos that they had caused disappeared. She was trying to exert power over the students to maintain some semblance of control in the room, hoping that our presence might encourage them to stop. The fact that she was a substitute teacher complicated matters, and her attempts to silence the room did not work.

With the exception of violent assaults, teachers were permitted to use their own discretion about when to call the police. In my observations, I witnessed teachers call police when students became rowdy, like this teacher, while other teachers simply let the chaos continue, like the teacher in abdicated power. This led to confusion and resentment among the students because sometimes the police were called for minor infractions and sometimes they were not. In this example, the teacher relinquished her power only after she realized that the students were not willing to concede to her demands. Here, the teacher actually relinquishes her power first to Daniel, who was able to orchestrate a massive uprising in the classroom, before she decided to call the police. This was clearly an unsafe situation for her as well as for the other students in the room. Once students realize they have the ability to control the classroom, it is virtually impossible for the teacher to maintain control in the classroom. The police may come and suspend the students, but once the teacher reverts to external support, the students sense her inability to control the classroom on her own and refuse to comply with her commands (Weber, 2005).

Moreover, students in this school, like many students in urban areas, have tenuous relationships with the police. Students of color, which account for 99% of Washington High School's student population, are much less likely to recognize police as legitimate authority figures (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Carr, Napolitano, & Keating, 2007; Fine et al., 2003; Wilkinson, Beaty, & Lurry, 2009). The teacher's reliance on the police only exacerbated the tense relationship between the students and the police and failed to provide a permanent solution to the challenges that she faced in this classroom. Thus, *relinquished power* is an unproductive way to maintain control for it relies on a weak form of power that the students can easily overcome. It is not legitimate authority (Weber, 2005).

FAILED ATTEMPTS TO CULTIVATE AUTHORITY

The past three examples illustrate that power is an ineffective means for maintaining control and creating engaging learning communities in schools. Abdicated power, where teachers simply renounce their responsibility to manage the classroom, creates chaotic environments that are not conductive to learning. Teachers in this situation feel that they cannot control the classroom, and thus, they cannot teach effectively. Autocratic power, which tries to suppress events that might lead to challenges, is counterproductive because it lacks school-wide norms and tends to escalate misconduct and, at times, violence. Relinquished power has similar effects in the classroom. Relying on external authorities to restore order weakens the teacher's ability to manage her students on her

own. The next three examples, *thwarted authority*, *partitioned authority,* and *goal-oriented authority*, depict teachers who attempt to establish authority in their classrooms. As we will see, these approaches fail because students do not always believe that the teachers have established the legitimacy necessary for authority (Weber, 2005).

THWARTED AUTHORITY

In the beginning of the year, many teachers at Washington High School explicitly outline classroom rules and explain that these rules are necessary to cultivate an engaging classroom environment. As we have already seen, if the students do not recognize the legitimacy of the teacher's authority to establish classroom rules, they will not endorse the rules. If the students recognize the legitimacy of the teacher's authority to set classroom rules, they will voluntarily endorse and comply with the rules. Teachers must constantly work to maintain the legitimacy of their authority for it is dependent on the student's recognition of it. In other words, legitimate authority is fragile. The next example, thwarted authority, refers to teachers who work diligently to establish legitimate authority in their classrooms, but unfortunately, lose control of this legitimacy the moment they apply classroom rules inconsistently. Once the students realize that the teacher is not willing to apply the classroom rules consistently, the students refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the teacher's authority, and as a result, do not willingly comply with the classroom rules (Weber, 2005).

In the middle of the year, I agreed to work with a teacher at Washington to reform the process for senior projects in his classroom. The teacher had an extended conversation with the students, and together, they devised a set of rules that the class agreed to abide by during the semester to try to cultivate a consensual classroom where teachers and students created rules together and shared authority (Apple, 1982; Fine & Weis, 2003; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Noddings, 2003). For example, the school district has a policy against the use of cell phones in the building. According to this policy, if students have cell phones, security officials are supposed to confiscate them when the students pass through the metal detector. However, students at Washington High School quickly realized that if they removed the battery from their cell phones, the metal detector did not identify these objects, and they could pass through the machine and retain their phones during the school day (Fieldnotes, October 1). This teacher explained that he knew that many students generally passed through the metal detectors with their cells phones; thus, he knew that they had access to their phones. However, he explained to the students

that using cell phones during class was disruptive and told them that he wanted to institute a rule that prohibited their use in his classroom. The students agreed to this rule. However, they had a stipulation. They told us that if they could not use their cell phones, teachers should not be allowed to use them. Apparently, some teachers in the building used their cell phones during class, and the students said that it was a disruption for them, as well. He agreed that teachers could not use their cell phones during class. Then, the students asked if they could have permission to use the teacher's phone in an emergency—many of these students had young children or were the primary caretakers for their grandparents and their siblings. The teacher agreed. Together, the class decided if anyone used his or her cell phone in class after class began, it would be confiscated and returned after class (Fieldnotes, January 28). This was a new rule for students and teachers; during the first week, he took several cell phones. Even when he did this, students did not argue with him. Once the students realized the consequences were enforced, by the second week, the students willingly complied with it because it was reasonable, it promoted learning, and it was applied consistently. In short, the teacher possessed legitimate authority—students recognized this and voluntary complied with this new rule (Fieldnotes, February 1). Initially, the students recognized the teacher's authority and complied with the new rule (Weber, 2005).

A few weeks later, a new student, Tiffany, transferred from another section in the school (Fieldnotes, February 12). Transfers were routine at Washington High School, but this constant influx of new students often wreaked havoc on already strained classroom environments. The teacher explained the cell phone rule to her, but Tiffany refused to abide by the rule, arguing that she used her cell phone all the time in other classes. The teacher tried to reprimand her. Tiffany maintained her position, and the teacher eventually caved. Tiffany won the battle. Tiffany did not recognize the legitimacy of the teacher's authority because this rule differed from rules in other classrooms (Weber, 2005). Once Tiffany proved that she could use her cell phone without being reprimanded, the other students ignored the rule. The disintegration of authority was amplified because Tiffany was one of the most powerful students in the class. The notion that she was a leader in the room who did not buy into the teacher's rules had a strong influence on other students to disregard the norms and undermined the teacher's authority. Eventually, the students began breaking other rules and effectively thwarted the teacher's authority. Thwarted authority fails in practice because the moment one student proves that it is possible to overtake the teacher's authority, it is virtually impossible for any teacher to reclaim it.

PARTITIONED AUTHORITY

Partitioned authority refers to situations where teachers successfully claim authority in their own classrooms; however, their authority does not spread beyond their classroom boundaries. These teachers refuse to assist with the management of other areas in the school because, in their opinion, this is not their responsibility. They believe that anything can happen in the hallways and it is best to remain in their "bunkers" (Teacher 3, interview, September 17). Teachers who relied on this form of authority often told me that I should not reprimand students for inappropriate behavior (Fieldnotes, October 31). They suggested that students in Washington High School differed from students in other schools. Washington students, they argued, had proven that they could snap at any point. Many teachers assumed that it was better to avoid or ignore disciplinary infractions if you did not know the student well. It was simply too dangerous. While these teachers were willing to exercise authority inside of their classrooms, they refused to do anything about situations that extended beyond their immediate jurisdiction.

The most salient example of partitioned authority that I experienced during my observations occurred on a sunny, autumn day (Fieldnotes, September 21). I was walking to my car to leave the school when I noticed a group of five boys loitering in the parking lot. They looked like they should have been in school, so I wandered over to them and asked what they were doing. The boys snidely remarked, "We are standing here." I quickly replied, "Yes, I can see that, but unfortunately, this is school property and you cannot stay here." I was annoyed, and so I asked, "Where do you go to school?" The two younger boys, who looked like they were between 10 and 12 years old, laughed. I smiled and assertively said, "You look like you should be in school. It's Friday and it's school time," looking at the face of my watch. "Right? It's only noon." One boy confessed that he was, as I suspected, in middle school, and the older boy told me that he was in ninth grade at Washington. I continued to push, much to their dismay, saying, "If you are both supposed to be in school, what are you doing here?" They pointed at their older cousin and candidly remarked that he had signed them out of school early. When I asked their cousin why he did that, he said that he always does it. They leave school early and meet people at the basketball court.

I was increasingly worried because I had no idea what direction this conversation might take. I was acting on my own instinct as an educator. I knew that these children should be in school and so I started questioning them. The only problem was that I did not know their personalities, or even their names, and this made me a bit anxious. As I questioned

the students, a security guard walked past, said hello to me, and then, looked at the boy who attended Washington and said, "Hello, Tyrik." He clicked the remote control to unlock his car, glanced at me, said, "Have a good afternoon," and left the premises. Moments later, another teacher opened the gymnasium doors, made eye contact with me, and then turned around. I knew both of these teachers personally. They knew that I was a researcher with no authority at the school and, perhaps, they might have assisted me, or at the very least, called an administrator or police officer. However, since the school parking lot was outside their direct jurisdiction, they did not feel it was their responsibility to discipline these truant children.

Once I realized this, I told the students that they had a choice: they could go back into the building or they could leave the parking lot. I explained that I was going inside the building and that I would be back with the principal in about five minutes, so they needed to make a decision before I returned. The ninth grade student quipped, "How am I going to get back into the building?" To which I quickly replied, "I am sure that if you knew how to leave the building, you can figure out a way to get back into the building." I went back into the school and told the principal what happened; together we walked to the parking lot.

When we returned to the parking lot, I noticed that the oldest boy, the cousin, was standing on the steps outside the gym talking to two girls. The teacher who had refused to help me was standing nearby in the doorway of the gym. As long as the students did not enter the gymnasium, the teacher clearly did not think he had any responsibility to discipline him. When the principal came, he told the young man that he needed to leave the premises because he was not a Washington student. When I returned to the building, I glanced at the sign-in sheet at the main desk to see if the Washington freshman who was in the parking lot had returned to school. He heeded my advice—he walked through the front door, signed into the building, and presumably, returned to class.

The challenge with partitioned authority is that it causes a two-tiered system of authority: Teachers exercise authority in their classrooms, but outside of their classrooms, they deliberately avoid using this authority. This sends a signal to the school community that discipline in classrooms is the teachers' responsibility while discipline in the hallways is not their responsibility. Partitioned authority weakens the authority structures that the teachers have in Washington because students know that if they want to disrupt the social order of the school, they can, as long as they are outside the confines of the classroom (Weber, 2005).

GOAL-ORIENTED AUTHORITY

Goal-oriented authority refers to teachers who rely on external goals and aims, such as high school graduation or college acceptance, to strengthen the legitimacy of their classroom authority. These teachers use external goals, such as college placement, to augment the pervasive, weak authority structures that exist in their school. Teachers who draw on this type of authority approach routinely make references to external goals when students question the legitimacy of their authority in the classroom. For example, one teacher at Washington High, Ms. Daniels, used college acceptance as a way to enhance her authority and establish order in her classroom. This goal permeated all aspects of her practice, and her students knew Ms. Daniels as the teacher who "makes sure we go to college" (Student 2, interview, October 1). In fact, she required that all of her seniors take the SAT and apply to at least one college. She painstakingly oversaw every aspect of this process. Students filled out the SAT registration forms in her classrooms, and they received class credit when the forms were completed. She even worked with local churches to arrange subsidized overnight trips to colleges in other states so that her students understand that there is a wealth of opportunities for them to consider beyond their own neighborhood. Her curriculum was structured to help students succeed in college. In addition to taking the SATs, each student in her class wrote and was graded on the personal essay that they will use in their college applications. She decorated her entire classroom with college banners and posters so that students were constantly reminded that she believes each of them can attend college and eventually graduate.

Ms. Daniels's passion stems from her belief that even though conditions at Washington are difficult, if given the proper opportunities and skills, many students can be successful in the future. When the school alumni group presented an award to thank her for her efforts, the student body erupted, screaming and clapping wildly to acknowledge her unwavering commitment and support (Fieldnotes, March 7). Clearly, the youth recognized the devotion and dedication that she brings to her profession. Many of them remarked that they feel fortunate to have her as their teacher because they know that she is working to help them achieve this goal, even against great odds. Without her, some have said, they might not have even applied to college. She pushed them to make sure that not only did they apply to college, but that they attended college, as well.

Students respond well to this type of authority, for the most part, because they recognize that teachers who practice goal-oriented authority are trying to help them achieve particular objectives that will improve

their lives after Washington High School. Goal-oriented authority rests on the teacher's ability to use charisma to convince the students that the goal is worthwhile and attainable, and that with her guidance, they can achieve the goals that she has set for them (Weber, 2005). Most of the students believe that with her dedication and their diligence, they can achieve their goals and successfully get into and enroll at the college of their choice. Thus, it is possible for her to use an external goal, such as going to college, as a way to amplify her own authority in the classroom. However, there are a few students who do not see this goal as worthy because they do not think attending college is a valuable or realistic goal. In these cases, the external goal that the teacher uses to amplify her authority lacks meaning, particularly for students who simply want to graduate from high school. The goal is not salient to them because they have not internalized it for themselves. As a result, these students do not recognize the teacher's authority in the same way as those students who want to go to college.

Goal-oriented authority functions well when the students believe and consent to the school's (or in this case, the teacher's) goals. At Washington, many students argue that it is futile to pursue education beyond high school because they have older siblings who attended college, dropped out, and are now dealing with massive debt from their own loans. Others have family members who attended college, received a degree, and are stuck in low-wage, service-sector jobs. They question the utility of a college degree, and thus, they may not believe in this goal (Student 3, interview, December 7). Since authority hinges on the student's identification with the goal, students who do not identify with Ms. Daniels's desire for her students to attend college question the legitimacy of her authority in the classroom. Even though they realize that she cares about their futures and wants them to succeed, Ms. Daniels's students do not always recognize her authority as legitimate—sometimes students put their heads down on their desks and disengage from the learning process; other times, students remark that they are applying to college because Ms. Daniels wants them to, not because they want to enroll (Student 2, interview, October 1).

AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY

The past three examples draw attention to the fragile nature of legitimate authority—at one moment the teachers establish authority, yet at another moment, students challenge its legitimacy. In the first approach, thwarted authority, the teacher lost authority when students decided his authority was not legitimate because the rules were applied inconsistently. In the

second approach, partitioned authority, the teacher was willing to establish authority only in her classroom. The teacher's authority is partitioned because she was not willing to establish authority outside her classroom. Students may see this form of authority as weak and try to undermine it. It also negates the teacher's responsibility to control the corridors, which remain chaotic and unruly. The third approach, goal-oriented authority, has the potential to work; however, students must willingly acknowledge that the goals set forth in the classroom are worthy and achievable. For that to happen, the goal must have significance to them.

The next approach, *apprenticed authority,* illustrates a teacher who, in spite of the challenges at this school, successfully established authority in his classroom. As we will see, this approach is effective because the students voluntarily recognize the legitimacy of the teacher's authority (Weber, 2005).

APPRENTICED AUTHORITY

The final approach, apprenticed authority, describes a teacher who successfully established authority in his classroom by parceling out real, but limited, authority to his students. This, in turn, created an engaging learning community. As we will see, this apprenticeship model provides students with an approach that clearly delineates the rules and norms, and once they demonstrate compliance with these rules and norms, they earn the right to be in positions of authority.

In February, the principal told me that he had observed the only functional ninth grade classroom in the building and invited me to visit this classroom with him. When we walked into this classroom, the principal introduced me to Mr. Butler, the teacher, and asked him where he would like us to sit (Fieldnotes, March 28). Mr. Butler told us that it would be best if we waited until the students had taken their seats, and then he would find an empty seat for us. As I looked around the room, I noticed that, in many ways, this classroom looked quite similar to others in the building. Even though it was a sunny day, the windows were so filthy that they only allowed the faintest of light to penetrate the glass panes. Many of the blinds in the room were ripped; the floor was warped and stained. And like the other classrooms, Mr. Butler's fluorescent lights emitted an unappealing pale yellow light and a slight humming noise that could distract anyone, especially ninth grade adolescents. The television that rested on the back table had a black streak across the screen from a permanent marker. It was a demonstration of the vandalism that plagued the entire building.

Yet, at the same time, there were marked differences between this classroom and others that I had visited. There were several handmade

posters displayed on the walls. One had an image of an infant with a barbell that said, "Baby, this is Mr. Butler's class. You have to pull your own weight." At the front of the room, the chalkboard contained a meticulously handwritten outline detailing the learning objectives for today's lessons. Directly next to each task on the outline, he had indicated how each activity in the lesson plan corresponded to the state standards and the school district's mandated curriculum. Such clearly articulated learning directives and goals were rarely seen at Washington High School. At the front of the room, Mr. Butler had posted a list with each student's name and class standing. The list contained a tally of the student's completed and outstanding assignments for the semester. In other classes, Washington students complained that they never knew how they were progressing in the semester. They did not know what assignments were missing; grades, they argued, were arbitrary and calculated completely at the instructor's discretion (Fieldnotes, January 28). In Mr. Butler's classroom, each student could easily track the grades that he or she had earned over the course of the semester. Furthermore, missing assignments were clearly indicated. Again, this was a rare sight.

At 9:23, the bell rang for the beginning of fourth period and Mr. Butler told me that this class is a General English class (the chalkboard lists plans for both his General and Honors courses). As students entered, they exhibited behavior that one might observe at any high school. Some of the girls set their books on their desks and immediately moved to the hallway to sneak a few minutes of gossip before the final bell rings. Others walked in, took their seats, and discussed lunch options. At 9:27, the bell rang again to indicate the beginning of class. Suddenly, the tenor of the classroom changed. One of the students leaped out of his seat and locked the classroom door. (I later learned that this was a safety precaution so that other students do not barge into his classroom and it prevented late students from entering without being acknowledged). Then, the student read the journal question on the board, which is the first objective on the lesson plan. As the young man did this, Mr. Butler calmly walked around the room, clipboard in hand, and looked around to see who was present that morning. Once the young man finished reading the journal prompt, the students began writing their responses. At that moment, I realized I was witnessing an unfamiliar site. There were no cell phones. There were no late arrivals. There were no shouting students. I was stunned. In the past seven months observing other classrooms at Washington High School, I had never seen a ninth grade classroom seated and ready to learn the instant the bell rang.

As soon as everyone was settled, Mr. Butler told me to sit next to Malika and asked her to explain how classroom expectations, seat rank,

and mentor position operated. Malika told me that classroom expectations were a list of rules that students must follow in Mr. Butler's classroom. The expectations were a combination of school rules—students must arrive at class on time in their uniforms—as well as rules that were specific to Mr. Butler's classroom—students must respect the classroom mentor. In theory, everyone in the school should have abided by the school uniform rule (khaki pants and a white or green collared shirt) since it was a school policy. There are explicit rules that tell teachers to send students who have jeans or hooded sweatshirts to the main office immediately. However, I witnessed a variety of ways that students routinely violated this rule during my observations over the course of the academic year. For example, one morning, a young woman walked into her classroom, unzipped her khaki pants and revealed a pair of jeans that she had worn under the khaki pants. When I questioned her about it, she said, "I do this all the time. I wear the khaki pants to get through the metal detector in the morning and then I take them off. I like jeans better" (Student 5, interview; Fieldnotes, January 28). Other students hid hooded sweatshirts, which the administration called "hoodies," in various lockers around the building. They entered the school building and passed through the metal detectors in their uniforms and then went to their lockers to put their hoodies on over their uniforms (Fieldnotes, February 1). Students routinely ignored this rule since teachers and administrators did not consistently punish those who violated it.

Things operated differently in Mr. Butler's classroom. When students failed to uphold this or any other classroom rule on the list of expectations, he never raised his voice and he did not negotiate. Rather, he simply asked them to pull out their sheet, told them which expectation they broke, and deducted a set number of points from their class average. Malika told me that students did not like this because losing points for behavioral or academic problems on the class average affected the student's class seat or rank. This concept of seat rank mimics the methods professional orchestras use to determine where each musician sits. The points determined the student's rank, which in turn, determined the student's seat. Students earned points based on their academic progress as well as their adherence to classroom expectations. Thus, students who excelled academically, yet fail to meet other classroom expectations were ranked lower than those students who met expectations and did well academically. The points can fluctuate each day, depending on student performance on exams, journal entries, and behavior. When students entered the classroom each day, they checked the point sheet hanging on the wall in the front of the classroom to determine where they were supposed to sit. Since this information was public, each student knew the peers' performance.

To help students with their academic progress, Mr. Butler gave them a list outlining the assignments that they must complete each marking period. The list indicated each assignment's due date and point value. Malika remarked that this list is "very useful because it helps me remember what I have to do in his classroom." She continued, explaining that in other classrooms, teachers often did not explain assignments or return student work, and so, "it is difficult for me to know how I am doing in those classes." Even though "the work is much harder" in Mr. Butler's classroom, she explained, "at least I know what I need to do" (Student 6, interview; Fieldnotes, March 28). Mr. Butler required students to write the lesson plan and journal questions each day in their notebooks. According to Malika, there were two reasons for this. First, if the students had the lesson plans in their notebooks, they always knew what assignments and tasks they must complete. Second, since each lesson plan clearly indicated the learning objective for the day, the students had a clearer sense of what they were learning and why. Malika told me that this system helped her with her academic work since she knew exactly what Mr. Butler wanted her to do each day and how it related to the learning goals he set for them.

Malika explained the classroom mentor's role, saying that the classroom mentor does "whatever a teacher would normally do." During this visit, Jeremy served as the classroom mentor. Jeremy, not Mr. Butler, locked the door and read the lesson plan at the beginning of class. When the students completed their journal entries, Jeremy asked for volunteers to share what they have written. Jeremy selected two students. The students walked to the front of the room and read their journal entries to the entire class. As they did this, two students who were seated in the back of the room began talking. Eventually, the noise escalated to the point where everyone in the room could hear them. Mr. Butler deducted points because these students violated the expectation that students will be respectful while others are speaking. Then, he told Jeremy to sit next to these two disruptive students and remind them to be respectful and sit quietly during the presentation. Jeremy walked over to them, sat at their table, and calmly told them that they should not be talking during presentations. Suddenly, their chatter ceased (Fieldnotes, March 28).

The mentor position is one example of how Mr. Butler distributed authority in his classroom. During my observations, classroom mentors took attendance, passed out books, led class discussions, and disciplined students (Fieldnotes March 31, April 4, and April 18). When I asked Mr. Butler about the mentor position, he told me that the position is a privilege; it is not automatically given to students. Students must earn the right to be in this position of authority. To be a mentor, students must have

completed all of their assignments and must have followed expectations. Furthermore, Mr. Butler reserved the right to revoke the position at any time if the mentor did not maintain good standing in the community (Fieldnotes, March 31). During my observations, this never happened.

For the most part, teachers at Washington High School constantly lamented about the unruly, unmanageable, disobedient ninth grade class. As a result, the roster chair divided ninth grade sections among teachers so that one teacher did not have to bear the burden of teaching too many ninth grade sections. Typically, teachers had one, maybe two sections of ninth grade students. Not Mr. Butler. He had five. Everyone knew that his sections lacked the characteristic disruption, chaos, and confusion that plagued the other ninth grade sections. As a result, other ninth grade teachers envied him and were eager to try his system in their classrooms. They argued that it seemed easy to replicate. It seemed simple. Mr. Butler gave students points for good behavior and academic work. He deducted points for inappropriate behavior and weak academic work. However, every time teachers tried to model Mr. Butler's practice, they failed. I saw this discussed over and over again, in whole-school faculty meetings, in department meetings, and in casual conversations. Everyone told Mr. Butler that his system simply did not work in his or her classroom. They would credit their failures with a multitude of excuses. He had "better students" than they did. He had "easier classes." His schedule was better. No one asked him why it might have failed (Fieldnotes, November 26 and March 1).

It seems that these teachers did not realize that Mr. Butler's point system was not simply a form of glorified behaviorism where students earn and lose points, which in fact, seems like Weber's notion of power (Weber, 2005). Rather, the points and expectations provide the structural support that enables him to distribute authority to his students. I must admit that I never realized the complexity of his practice until I questioned him about it one afternoon. In April, I told Mr. Butler that I had some reservations about his practice and asked if he would be willing to answer a few questions that I had. I was increasingly concerned that the point system, with its ranks and expectations, promoted a meritocracy that focused primarily on individual efforts among his students. Mr. Butler bluntly remarked that he thinks competition can be a useful tool for engaging students. Besides, he said, much of our success later in life is based on individual merit and competition, and so, he believed there was room for competition in any classroom. He explained that he tried to balance the meritocracy by giving students "booster points." These points, he argued, created a sense of community while simultaneously acknowledging individual achievement.

Mr. Butler explained that his idea of "booster points" stemmed from his own experiences as a runner in college. The coach wanted all of the athletes to run a mile in less than seven minutes; if they accomplished this goal, they could go home. If they did not accomplish it, they had to continue running. Of course there were some that could do this easily, while others struggled. Like any race, the fastest runners stayed in the front of the pack and the slower ones were relegated to the back. One day, however, the group decided to try something new: the fastest runners ran in the back to push the slower runners. They called this the "booster mile" because it boosted those who were not initially successful.

Mr. Butler took this idea and applied it to his own teaching practice. According to him, booster points served as a mechanism to help students understand that they are responsible for supporting their peers in the classroom. Students could earn "booster points" for a variety of things. For example, he assigned them to peer editing groups, and when students were ready to turn in their work, they turn in a final product as well as drafts with peer editing marks. Mr. Butler assessed the final product as well as the support that the student received from his or her group. If the peer group was supportive, the students receive booster points. Students also earn booster points for helping their peers with presentation skills or with exam preparation. While this process is difficult in the beginning, since it is so new for these ninth graders, by the end of the year, the students began to realize that they were more successful working together than they were working on their own.

As he continued, he told me that "my practice is like bamboo. There is a clear structure, but it has flexibility." He said that the classroom expectations and seat ranks provided him with the structure, but the booster points promoted flexibility and allowed him to distribute authority more widely for students as they are ready for it (Teacher 6, interview; Fieldnotes, April 18). For example, as I said, he encouraged students to study together for exams, and in a nontraditional twist, he allowed students to take exams whenever they are ready (Fieldnotes, March 31 and April 4). Thus, students did not always take exams on the same date. Every day, the mentor asked if anyone would like to take an exam that day, and those who were ready selected the exam that they wanted to take. They used their expectations sheets to gauge what needed to be done by the end of the marking period and adjusted their schedules accordingly. This flexible system gave students freedom and power, in other words, the authority to decide when they were ready to take an exam and prove what they have learned.

Students did not challenge Mr. Butler's authority because they recognized it as legitimate (Weber, 2005). Furthermore, by giving students

positions of authority that are typically reserved only for teachers, Mr. Butler not only asked his students to recognize his authority—he also challenged them to become active participants in cultivating and upholding the authority he deliberately distributed to the entire community. He wanted them to become his apprentices, and thus, instead of one teacher, there were 24 teachers in his classroom. He clearly articulated expectations that he believed they could reach; he provided flexibility to help each student succeed; and he distributed authority to encourage them to participate in upholding the structures he instituted. The approach works because, as John Dewey suggests, "the social control resides in the very nature of the work done as a social enterprise in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute and to which all feel a responsibility" (Dewey, 1997, p. 163). This is the secret to his success.

THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF APPRENTICED AUTHORITY

The following November, over a year after I finished my fieldwork at Washington High School, I sat at my desk and decided to read the educational headlines in the city's newspaper. As I scanned the headlines, I noticed a description of another teacher attack at Washington High School. This time, however, it was a teacher I knew—it was Mr. Butler. According to the article, two students, who were not enrolled in Mr. Butler's class, stormed into his classroom before the period had begun and threatened to attack one of his students. The attack was retaliation for a transgression that Mr. Butler's student had committed against these two young men the previous day after school. Mr. Butler asked them to leave his classroom. The two students, like so many others at Washington High School, were not accustomed to this. Instead of following Mr. Butler's request, they punched him. The following day, a small article appeared in the newspaper detailing the incident—Mr. Butler, injured during the incident, had returned to his classroom the day after it occurred. Unlike the previous incident, this assault did not incite any media or district-level response. Perhaps this was because Mr. Butler did not rush to the media, or perhaps, like the other attacks on teachers and students that happened in the past at this school, district officials did not want to call any more attention to the precarious situation at Washington High School.

The students in his classroom recognized and adhered to the legitimate authority that he created; however, the students who were not enrolled in his classroom did not. As this paper suggests, students internalize the disciplinary tactics and behavioral norms they experience, and at times, their understanding of this spills over into other classrooms. This has positive and negative consequences. Teachers who fail to cultivate

authority in their classrooms instill Washington High School students with a certain understanding about school norms and rules. It is likely that the two students who punched Mr. Butler believed that they had the right to challenge his authority because they had successfully undermined their teachers' authority in other classrooms at Washington High School. These students had already learned that they could easily intimidate adults and usurp their teachers' authority. They had already been in classrooms that did not cultivate legitimate authority, and so, they did not recognize Mr. Butler's authority (Weber, 2005).

This story is not meant to suggest that Washington High School is a school that is completely beyond repair, although there were days when it might have seemed this way. Rather, the analysis of Mr. Butler's innovative practice and the description of the assault highlight the possibilities and limitations of his approach. It is clear that the students in his classroom legitimately recognized his authority, engaged in the learning process, and eventually assumed authority roles themselves. His approach cultivated a safe haven for students in this chaotic, troubled school, and in turn, created an engaging learning environment for his students.

Even though there are times when it is difficult to imagine how anyone could work or learn in this environment, research has shown that there are many teachers working in difficult situations like the one at Washington High School. Research has also shown that strong student–teacher relationships are critical components of successful school reform, particularly for low-income communities (Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2011). However, the current research fails to show how teachers might cultivate these relationships in struggling urban high schools where they lack the institutional authority that they once had. Using Weber's distinction between power and authority, this study shows scholars and practitioners the importance of this distinction as well as the fragility of cultivating authority in urban schools. Mr. Butler's example illustrates the importance of using freedom and legitimacy to improve relational trust between students and teachers and for restoring authority, at least at the classroom level. His apprenticed authority model provides practitioners with a way to restore classroom order, cultivate relational trust, and create engaging learning environments despite the overwhelming challenges in their schools. It works because he balances structure with flexibility, which in turn, allows him to make his students apprentices who have real, but limited, forms of authority.

Again, it does not need to look exactly like his classroom; rather, his apprenticed authority offers a starting point to imagine new possibilities for teacher–student relationships and classroom engagement. Apprenticed authority provides educators with the ingredients necessary to give their

students real, but limited, forms of authority in their classrooms, which in turn, strengthens the teacher's legitimacy. Apprenticed authority has several requirements:

- Teachers articulate their expectations and convey these expectations to their students so that they understand them.
- Teachers design disciplinary policies that match the severity of the act and are applied consistently.
- Teachers give students the flexibility necessary for them to succeed academically.
- Teachers find ways to give students real, but limited, forms of authority in their classrooms and encourage them to uphold the expectations that the teachers have set for them.

That does not mean that the teachers who use apprenticed authority have to look exactly the same—as if it were a cookie-cutter solution to school reform. Teachers have to develop their own approach when implementing these ideas, and as Mr. Butler suggests, they have to remain flexible to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. At the same time, educators and administrators must work collaboratively to find legitimate and meaningful ways for students to have small, but real, forms of authority in their schools based on the criteria listed above. Mr. Butler's classroom illustrates the potential of this approach and, hopefully, inspires educators to engage in conversations to realize the possibilities his classroom provides.

At the same time, this episode demonstrates that one teacher, even one as talented as Mr. Butler, cannot single-handedly combat the challenges that have plagued the school and the community for decades. Comprehensive school reform requires addressing both the school and community context (Bryk et al., 2010; Payne, 2008). As Washington High School demonstrates, the teacher attack was not one isolated incident. Rather, it was one of many incidents that eroded the institutional authority and student engagement that occurred over the past several decades at Washington High School (Arum, 2005; Neckerman, 2007). As one person told me during my time at the school, "The school district in this city thinks of Washington High School as a pot of boiling water. As long as the lid stays on, no one cares what happens to it" (Fieldnotes, October, 31). The teachers and students who pass through the metal detectors each day at Washington High School know that the loss of authority and engagement did not simply happen the moment two students attacked one teacher. Someone would have to admit that before anything could

be reformed at this school. Once that happens, then, and only then, can the school community begin the important work of creating collaborative learning communities, cultivating relational trust with students and parents, and, as this study suggests, finding ways to provide students with legitimate forms of authority in schools where teachers lack the institutional authority that they once enjoyed.

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Notes

1. The names in this article for the institution, staff, and students are pseudonyms.
2. I acknowledge that it would be useful for readers to know the date of the attack. However, I have chosen to omit it to protect the identity of the school and the teachers featured in this article.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Four-Level Scale

Power[a]	
None	Power-holder is not well defined, and thus, power shifts throughout the classroom in a random fashion or is completely unclear.
Minimal Power	Power-holder impacts (controls or strongly influences) a small, defined number of the possible choices made by the individuals under his or her power.
Moderate Power	Power-holder impacts (controls or strongly influences) a defined set of the possible choices made by the individuals under his or her power.
Significant Power	Power-holder impacts (controls or strongly influences) nearly all of the possible choices made by the individuals under his or her power.
Freedom[b]	
None	Subordinates are not allowed to choose between various options.
Minimal Freedom	Subordinates are allowed to choose between a small defined set of options.
Moderate Freedom	Subordinates are allowed to choose between a defined set of options.
Significant Freedom	Subordinates are allowed to choose between a broad set of options (with no or limited restrictions).
Authority[c]	
None	Individuals do not have power and/or freedom, and thus, it is impossible to exercise authority.
Minimal Authority	Individuals have limited power and/or freedom. Subordinates do not recognize authority as legitimate.
Moderate Authority	Individuals have power and freedom. Subordinates generally recognize authority as legitimate.
Significant Authority	Individuals have power and freedom. Subordinates recognize authority as legitimate.

[a] Weber defines power as “the likelihood that one person in a social relationship will be able, even despite resistance, to carry out his own will” (Weber, 2005, p. 179). Thus, power is one’s ability to coerce others to follow one’s orders and commands.

[b] Freedom is the ability to exercise one’s will independent of others (Berlin, 2002; Mill, 2008).

[c] Weber suggests that “the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige” (Weber, 1968 cited in Weber, 2005, 174). Thus, authority is a combination of power, freedom, and legitimacy (Goodman, 2010).

Table A2. Classroom Norms and Sanctions

Power[a]	
None	Norms and sanctions are not set in the classroom, which causes a random distribution of power that constantly circulates in the classroom.
Minimal	Teacher asks students to assist with classroom norms and sanctions. Student provides broad input, and the teacher adopts many of their ideas.
Moderate	Teacher asks students to assist with classroom norms and sanctions. Students provide more limited input, and the teacher weighs the options and makes decisions on his or her own.
Significant	Teacher establishes the rules with no input from students.
Freedom[b]	
None	Teachers and/or students have no freedom to decide on norms and sanctions, and instead, simply comply with the school's established norms and sanctions.
Minimal	Teachers and/or students have limited freedom to decide on norms and sanctions. They rely heavily on the school's established norms and sanctions.
Moderate	Teachers and/or students have some freedom to decide on norms and sanctions. They may comply with some of the school rules and/or add their own.
Significant	Teachers and/or students have extensive freedom to decide on norms and sanctions for their classrooms. School rules and procedures are adopted only if they complement classroom norms and sanctions.
Authority[c]	
None	Norms and sanctions are unclear because the teacher has no power and/or freedom to establish rules.
Minimal	Students rarely comply with the norms and sanctions because they do not recognize them as legitimate. Often times, students challenge these norms and sanctions because they do not view them as legitimate. Norms and sanctions are applied inconsistently.
Moderate	Students generally comply with the norms and sanctions because they recognize them as legitimate. At times, students may challenge these norms and sanctions because they do not view them as legitimate. Norms and sanctions are usually applied consistently.
Significant	Students comply with the norms and sanctions because they recognize them as legitimate. Norms and sanctions are applied consistently.

[a] Weber defines power as "the likelihood that one person in a social relationship will be able, even despite resistance, to carry out his own will" (Weber, 2005, p. 179). Thus, power is one's ability to coerce others to follow one's orders and commands.

[b] Freedom is the ability to exercise one's will independent of others (Berlin, 2002; Mill, 2008).

[c] Weber suggests that "the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige" (Weber, 1968 cited in Weber, 2005, 174). Thus, authority is a combination of power, freedom, and legitimacy (Goodman, 2010).

Table A3. Classroom Curriculum and Instruction

Power[a]	
None	Teacher follows a scripted or standardized program.
Minimal	Teacher gives students a number of instructional and curricular choices. For example, students may choose books for independent reading and English class.
Moderate	Teacher gives students a limited number of instructional and curricular choices. For example, he or she may allow them to choose a book during independent reading, but not during English class.
Significant	Teacher does not give students instructional and curricular choices. For example, he or she may dictate book choices during independent reading and English class.
Freedom[b]	
None	Students do not have any choice in the classroom.
Minimal	Students are allowed to choose between a small-defined number of instructional and curricular options and exercise this right.
Moderate	Students are allowed to choose between a defined number of instructional and curricular options and exercise this right.
Significant	Students are allowed to choose between a broad set of instructional and curricular options and exercise this right.
Authority[c]	
None	Instructional and curricular choices are based solely on scripted or standardized programs; students do not comply with any of the instructional or curricular aims.
Minimal	Students rarely engage with the instructional and curricular aims because they do not see them as legitimate.
Moderate	Students generally engage with the instructional and curricular aims because they see them as legitimate. At times, they might voice their concerns if they do not believe they have the freedom to choose options.
Significant	Students engage with the instructional and curricular aims because they see them as legitimate. In the rare instances when students disengage, either the teacher or another student redirects their efforts to engage them in the learning process.

[a] Weber defines power as “the likelihood that one person in a social relationship will be able, even despite resistance, to carry out his own will” (Weber, 2005, p. 179). Thus, power is one’s ability to coerce others to follow one’s orders and commands.

[b] Freedom is the ability to exercise one’s will independent of others (Berlin, 2002; Mill, 2008).

[c] Weber suggests that “the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige” (Weber, 1968 cited in Weber, 2005, 174). Thus, authority is a combination of power, freedom, and legitimacy (Goodman, 2010).

FIELDNOTES, MR. BUTLER'S CLASSROOM, MARCH 31

This is an example of how I used the two scales (Tables 2 and 3) to analyze my fieldnotes.

I walk into Mr. Butler's classroom and he tells me that I can stay, although they have changed the lessons for the week due to the upcoming state testing. Three students walk into the room and immediately they check their points for the day, which tells students where to sit. (*Moderate Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—norms and sanctions*) One student has passed his peers and the third child says, "He's back on his game again." Two more students come into the classroom and check their points. Another student walks in the door and is elated when he sees that he is currently in the "first seat" in the class. Mr. Butler jokingly tells him that "miracles happen" and the boy quickly replies, "It's not a miracle. I just do my work."

After the late bell, Mr. Butler says, "Isaiah." Isaiah is still the mentor. (The girl next to me tells me that you serve as mentor for five days; this is his second day.) Isaiah calmly tells the students to be quiet so that he can read the lesson. The students quickly stop talking, with the exception of Jasmine and the boy across from her. Isaiah reads the agenda and the journal question. (*Minimal Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—curriculum and instruction*) Isaiah reminds students that they need to write one page to get the full amount of points. Mr. Butler reminds them that a good tactic is to use the 5 Hs and 5 Ws. He says answering questions like how, what, when, and where helps them with descriptions that liven their writing. Isaiah lets three students, who are late, into the room. Mr. Butler marks this because being late is a point reduction. (*Moderate Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—norms and sanctions*)

The journal topic for the day is written on the board: Write about the longest trip you have taken. (*Minimal Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—curriculum and instruction*) Mr. Butler walks around and checks to see what people are doing. One student is not doing anything and Mr. Butler says, "I don't want you to sit here the whole period." Another student chimes in and says, "Yeah, you have to get your work done to pass." Mr. Butler walks away and lets the student handle it. (*Moderate Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—norms and sanctions*) He tells everyone that if they want to take tests today, they can. Then, he tells them, "Anyone who gets less than a 3, that's it, you are done for the day."

I ask a student about being the mentor and he says that he likes it because he likes to help out. I ask him about Mr. Butler's class, whether it's similar or different from other classes at Washington and he says, "There are a lot of differences. He has expectations, and I have to do them even

though sometimes I don't want to." I look around the classroom and one of the students is writing the expectations four times each because she was out of uniform.

Students are required to write lesson plans. I ask one of the girls how she feels about this and she says, "It is useful because I can remember what I need to do." Then, she pulls out her point sheet and shows me how this, too, helps her remember what she needs to do each semester. *I think about this in relation to other classrooms that I have been in. Lots of students complain that, sometimes, teachers do not communicate with them about the expectations or assignment, and then, when they get their grades, they are disappointed by them.* One student says that she wants to do a reading. (Students receive points for writing and presenting their work.) Mr. Butler calmly reminds Isaiah to make sure that everyone is listening to the person reading the poem. Isaiah looks around and students, with the exception of Jasmine, are quiet. After she is finished, there is applause. (*Moderate Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—norms and sanctions)*

I ask the girl next to me if she feels that she can ask her peers for help, and she says, "Yeah, I ask other students for help." Then, Sierra, the girl at my table, gets up and says that she wants to read her journal entry. Mr. Butler announces, "Sierra is going to read a journal." He tells everyone that Sierra is going to read and reminds the class that she hasn't done one in a while. Sierra reads slowly and is barely audible in the room. When she is done, there is applause, and Mr. Butler says, "See, you didn't have a heart attack." Sierra smiles and says that she has another journal entry to read. (*Minimal Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—curriculum and instruction*) *It seems that Mr. Butler's comments boost her confidence.* Mr. Butler reminds them that they need to encourage one another because reading in front of a group of people can be difficult. When Sierra is finished, they applaud, and she says she wants to read one more. Jasmine continues to talk throughout, and eventually, Mr. Butler looks at Isaiah; Isaiah moves over and sits next to Jasmine. Jasmine makes eye contact with Mr. Butler and smiles. She stops talking.

When Sierra is finished, Mr. Butler tells her that she did a nice job, but tells her that she might want to provide the reader with more details. Her entry was about a party, but, he says, she didn't tell us whom the party was for or if she enjoyed it. Mr. Butler asks if anyone wants to read a journal entry before he gives quizzes; no one does. Throughout the class, several students have been studying. Some are doing it independently and others are working in groups. Mr. Butler asks the students which quizzes they want to take. He distributes the quizzes, and tells students to sit "where I can see you, folks." The students spread out all over the room and take the quizzes. When they are finished, he grades them and announces the

grades. While students take quizzes, others are finishing journal entries. Another group is reading a story together, taking turns reading it aloud. At the end of the period, Isaiah collects the books and puts them away. Another student picks up the broom and sweeps the floor. At the end of the period, students chat quietly. One of the students is fooling around, and Mr. Butler says, "Joseph, do you like being in the first group? Are you going to stay there?" Joseph says yes, and Mr. Butler says, "Okay." Then, he asks, "How many people got points today?" Students enthusiastically raise their hands and he tells them "give yourself applause." The students quietly filter out of the room when the bell rings. (*Minimal Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—curriculum and instruction*)

INTERVIEW, MR. BUTLER, APRIL 18

This is an example of how I used the two scales (Tables 2 and 3) to analyze my semistructured interviews.

After dismissal, I meet Mr. Butler. He is standing at the fence alone, soaking up the sunny day. I thank him for letting me visit his class and tell him that what I have seen has given me a great deal to think about. I tell him that he has really pushed me to think critically about how to provide students with structure, while allowing them to have some freedom in the classroom. I ask him if he ever worries that the point system encourages too much competition in his classroom. He bluntly tells me that he thinks competition is a good thing because you have to do it in life. I ask him, though, if he is able to mediate between encouraging community and supporting individual merit, which is a hallmark of any classroom based on competition. He told me that students sometimes tease one another about the point system, but that when it gets out of hand, he curbs it by reminding them that they should focus only on what they are doing.

He also tells me that he gives out points for helping one another. He says he calls it the Booster, named after an experience he had in college, where individuals had to run a mile in seven minutes. If everyone did it, they were done. If part of the team didn't make it, the whole group had to run it again in the afternoon. Mr. Butler said that he could run a mile in seven minutes, but after the group failed several times, he realized that if he ran in the back with the slower runners and pushed them to run as fast as him, then, the group would be able to accomplish its goal. And so, he used to call this the Booster mile. He encourages his students to do the same thing, to realize that, if they help one another, not only will they, as a group, be able to accomplish more, but that as individuals, they will learn the material better because they are teaching it to someone.

He says that the point system and his teaching are “like bamboo. It has structure, but it is very flexible.” (*Moderate Power, Significant Freedom, Significant Authority—norms and sanctions*)

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