Speaking Up Publically or Acting Behind the Scenes: Renegade Teachers

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Abstract: This research study utilized Q methodology to explore the perceptions of New York State K-12 public school teachers regarding the concept of being a "renegade teacher." The authors defined "renegade" as those individuals who persist in doing what they perceive as the right thing, regardless of potential repercussions from peers and/or administrators. Through the use of centroid factor analysis and theoretical rotation, two factors emerged: Outspoken Renegade and Quiet Renegade. The researchers found that the majority of the participants acted as an outspoken renegade and in the best interests of the students, despite the perceived risks and costs. In contrast, the quiet renegade, although sharing some qualities with the outspoken renegade, preferred to go unnoticed in their actions by others. Both factor types were motivated by a sense of moral purpose and vision. Tangentially, taking action may have an influence on personal feelings of happiness and hope.

Introduction

Through the use of Q methodology, this study examined how K-12[1] teachers in New York State self-define and self-identify as a "renegade" change agent in the workplace. This study tangentially explored the potential bearing of being a renegade on one's personal interpretations of hope and happiness. While there have always been change agents (Fullan, 1993) present in schools addressing issues such as equity and social justice, the timing of this study presented a unique shift in the roles of those change agents as their actions now include responses to public educational policy. This study was conducted just prior to and during the 2012 school year when New York State adopted and implemented the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS), nationalized standards that were part of the Race to the Top Legislation. States adopted these standards in order to gain access to additonal funding. This legislation also mandated Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plans, a form of teacher evaluation which is, in part, based on scores from state-required examination aligned with the CCSS in grades 3-8. These state mandates influence how schools operate on a daily basis, as well as the teachers in those schools. Imposed policies from outside the

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[1] K-12 is a term that is used in the North American school system to designate Kindergarten through the 12th grade, that is, both primary and secondary education.
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schools alter the discourse within the schools without necessarily having the consent of those impacted. As noted by Fecho, Coombs, and McAuley (2012: 477)

> Schools have become supersized, standardized, depersonalized spaces that alienate teachers from students via imposed organizational structures and the institution of schooling itself (Meier, 2000). In such spaces, the researchers find teachers, often alone, who work against the institutions' discourse in their efforts to make students feel "important, capable, valued, and empowered" (Hyland, 2009, p. 102).

Teachers often act as change agents, in the classroom and school districts for students and peers (Levine 2013, p. 2; VanSlyke-Briggs, 2010). Teachers who participated in this study responded to the intense pressure they experienced with these changes in various ways, and many began to engage in change agentry practices. In some cases, despite the professional career risks that these actions could potentially initiate, these changes prompted some teachers to become education activists at the community and state level. Additionally, the participating teachers motivated to action reported this sustained them in the workplace, and provided a sense of empowerment. They shared the view that their actions nourished their personal happiness and sense of hope. When one's actions are at odds with the hegemonic discourse of the established school culture in which one works, acting against this culture can invite backlash from the administration and/or peers (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991).

With an interest in exploring teachers as change agents, this study focused on teacher self-perception. The key research goals that guided this study included: Do teachers perceive themselves as change agents? What compels them to act in a renegade fashion, despite potential consequences? What are the limits and risks that teachers are willing to take as self-identified change agents? With these goals in mind, the research question of this exploratory study was: In what ways do K-12 public school teachers perceive their identity as a renegade in the workplace?

Literature Review

In the United States, public school teachers are ever-coping with educational reform initiatives such as the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the United States Department of Education contest called Race to the Top Fund, announced in 2009. The Race to the Top Fund (commonly known as Race to the Top, and abbreviated as either R2T, RTT or RTTT) is a competitive grant program that States can apply for to receive federal funding for the purpose of education reform within the State and its local school districts (ed.gov, n.d.). Requirements include the development of a State-wide data system of student test scores based on standardized high-stakes tests, and a teacher performance evaluation system that is, in part, linked to student test scores (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

The stated intent of these mandated, institutional reforms is the improvement of student learning outcomes via test-based accountability, and increased teacher performance as evidenced by rising student test scores. However, unintended consequences among many teachers as a result of such reforms – perceived as deprofessionalizing the profession (Sachs, 2003) – have been lowered morale, heightened stress levels, and a growing frustration, particularly given research that finds that student test scores are not reliable measures of teacher effectiveness (Baker, et al, 2010). As Burnaford and Hobson (2001) note, "[t]he future for the teaching profession may seem dismal. Teachers struggle with reform initiatives that are often top-down and temporary" (p. 229). Burnaford and Hobson also note that as a result of

these changes, teacher roles, images and stereotypes begin to change (p. 230). One of these roles, born out of one's perceived identity – what we are calling the "renegade teacher," – is that of the teacher activist (Sachs, 2003).

Sachs (2003) defines a teacher activist as one who engages with and responds to "issues that relate directly or indirectly to education and schooling...it requires risk-taking and fighting for ideals that will enhance education. It also requires passion, determination and energy" (p. 33). According to Nieto, teacher change agents, what she calls "active agents," are those "whose words and deeds change lives and mold futures" (2003, p. 19). Mikel and Hiserman identify these activist teachers as individuals who "plan and work hard in many ways and in many arenas for policy, institutional and school-level change" (2001, p. 116).

Research has shown that teacher identity is closely bound to one's sense of self, ideals, moral purpose, and that which gives meaning and purpose in life in terms of one's students and the profession (Day, 2004). Fullan (1993) has long spoken of the relationship between teaching as a moral enterprise and teachers being agents of change. Meyerson (2001), in her research on change agents and types of change agent engagement in the workplace, found that individuals working for change were motivated by a variety of personal ideals and perceived themselves as "committed catalysts" (p. 5) with the goal of making a positive difference. Change agent engagement was evidenced in what she called a spectrum of strategies, such as resisting quietly and in the background while remaining true to one's convictions so one's actions are generally not visible by others, to those who act "more deliberately to change the way the organization does things" (p. 5).

Meyerson (2001) notes that these engagement behaviors are more public, such as expressing one's opinions at meetings to that of organizing for collective action. In the case of the education profession and educational policies, collective action could be targeted at the local, state, or even federal level. These actions are "more likely to encounter resistance" (p. 8), whether from colleagues, administration, or even policymakers. One recent response to current educational reform changes has been the formation of a collection of teachers known as Bad Ass Teachers (BATS). These "justice fighters," as co-founder Mark Naison identifies them, are teacher activists responding to "corporate education reform" (2014, p. 13) and it is these teachers who provide the "counternarrative" (p. 51) to the current discourse of high-stakes standardized testing being equated with student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Naison explains that teachers need "constant mobilization, creative organizing, and the multiplication of individual acts of courage and resistance" to reclaim education from what he identifies as a "political juggernaut" (p. 92), that is, a powerful political force coupled with corporate influence that is increasingly overwhelming the education profession and deprofessionalizing teachers. It is the teacher activist, what the authors are calling the teacher renegade, who does the work of resistance.

In New York State, where the researchers reside, a number of imposed education reforms have taken place over the past few years at the time of this study, such as the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), standardized high-stakes testing based on the CCSS, and a teacher evaluation system designed to satisfy the Race to the Top stipulations. The researchers have personally witnessed increasing pushback on these changes from many public school teachers, of both an outspoken and quiet nature.

Method

This exploratory study utilized a combination of focus groups, Q methodology and follow up interviews to examine perceptions of the concept of teacher renegades in the K-12 public school setting. The researchers first conducted two focus group sessions with New York State teachers during June of 2012 (see Table 1). One focus group was with rural teachers and the second with urban teachers, in order to obtain their views on the concept of a renegade teacher in the workplace and the possible implications of identifying with this descriptor. Both sites were organized by a site coordinator; each was a member of their respective school district. The coordinator gathered participants and set a meeting location and time at the school site for the group to meet.

The urban school district location (although not every teacher at this location was an urban teacher) was identified as focus group U. There were seven participants at this location and all were female.

Table 1: Focus Group Demographics*

Focus Groups Demographics	Rural Site	Urban Site
Total Number of Participants	7	7
Number of Male Participants	1	0
Number of Female Participants	6	7
Years of Service		
Less than 5 years	2	0
5 to 9 years	2	1
10 to 15 years	1	3
16 to 20 years	1	0
21+ years	1	3
School Size		
Rural	7	0
Urban	0	4
Suburban	0	3

* Note that teachers came in from multiple surrounding schools for some of the focus group site interviews

The second location was a rural district identified as focus group M. There were seven participants at this location; all except one individual were female. The focus group meeting interviews also provided the researchers with statements used in the second step of the research process, the use of Q methodology.

The Q sample and procedure

Q methodology is a systematic research approach that is used for exploring subjective, self-referential points of view on any issue (Kitzinger, 1999). Subjectivity in Q methodology is defined as "a person's communication of his or her point of view" and is always "self-referent," that is, from the individual's own perspective (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 12). The Q sample statements drawn from this concourse were a hybrid design (McKeown & Thomas, 1988) taken from both naturalistic (focus group participant comments) and quasi-naturalistic sources (outside sources such as books, articles, etc.). The number of sample statements selected from the concourse followed an unstructured format that was guided by an effort to survey general discussion on the issue rather than on a predetermined structured experimental design.

    The statements utilized for this study were structured by prevalent themes from the focus group interviews and relevant literature. Duplicate or similar statements were merged. The remaining statements were set into similar groupings and evaluated for comprehensiveness and representativeness in terms of the research questions. This resulted in 44 Q sample statements. These were then randomized and presented online via the FlashQ program (www.hackert.biz/flashq) for participants to rank-order into a quasi-normal distribution pattern on an eleven-point scale (i.e., two cards each at +/- 5, two at +/- 4, three at +/- 3, five at +/- 2, six at +/- 1, and eight at 0). The participants were asked to sort the statements from "most like my perspective" (+5) to "most unlike my perspective" (-5) regarding how they perceive their identity as "renegade" change agents in their workplace.

Participants

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval for the research proposal, a request for participation in the online Q sorting process entailed the following process. An invitation email was sent to the participants of the two focus groups; this email had the link to the online study as well as the contact information of the researchers. These individuals, whether or not they chose to participate in this phase of the study, were asked to share this request for participants with other New York State teachers. The researchers also sent an email invitation for participation to personal contacts who were New York State teachers. Lastly, the request for participation was shared with the executive board of a New York State teacher professional organization. These efforts resulted in 26 participants – eight males and eighteen females. One female self-identified as Multiracial; the rest self-identified as White, non-Hispanic. Four males taught in a rural school district, three in a suburban, and one in an urban district. Ten females taught in a rural district, seven in suburban, and one in an urban setting.

Table 2: Q Sort Participant Demographics

Q Sort Participant Demographics		
Total Number of Participants	26	
Number of Male Participants	8	
Number of Female Participants	18	
Race		
Multiracial	1	
White, non-Hispanic	25	
School Setting		
	Male	**Female**
Rural	4	10
Urban	1	1
Suburban	3	7
Grade Level of Instruction		
Elementary	6	
Middle	4	
High	10	
Middle School and High School	6	

In the online sorting program, participants were asked to comment on their +5/ -5 and +4/-4 statement placements. Post-sorting interviews were held with key informants – those who were highly statistically representative of the resulting factors and had provided their contact information. These individuals were again contacted a year later at the beginning of their 2013 summer break by both email and phone interview, to identify any shifts in how they viewed themselves in light of the changes in education over the course of the year, which included the APPR teacher evaluation process, the new Common Core State Standards, and the debate over standardized testing.

Centroid factor analysis followed by theoretical rotation was utilized via the PQMethod 2.33 freeware (Schmolk, 2012). This resulted in two distinct factors. These factors were analyzed and interpreted in light of the placement of items in the composite Q sorts for each factor, participants' written comments, as well as follow up interview comments from key informants.

Results

The labels given to the emergent factors attempted to portray their primary theme. These labels were determined by separating out shared statements between the factors, examining the explanations provided for the highly ranked statements, and reinforced by explanatory comments from key informant interviews. The two factors were labeled Outspoken Renegade and Quiet Renegade. The terms "outspoken" and "quiet" are similarly reflective of Meyerson's (2001) research of change agent behavior, where she observed a spectrum of change agent behavioral strategies, ranging from quiet resistance to outwardly visible resistance.

Factor One: Outspoken Renegade

Factor 1 represents the majority of the participants (18 out of 26). Based on statement rankings in the factor array (see Table 3), this factor type engages in actions to fight for what they perceive is right, not only for their students but education as a whole, and speak their views. This type contrasts decidedly with Factor 2, where the tendency is to work for change in a quiet, almost unnoticed manner (see Factor 2 discussion). For Outspoken Renegades, engagement in outward actions as well as verbally expressing one's views despite consequences (35: -3; 26: -4; and 33: -5) is grounded in a vision of what change would look like (7: +4). This vision was deemed as energizing the desire to fight for and being proactive for change (28: +3) in the educational system as well as for one's students. Participant 26 noted that, "without my vision, I would not be doing what I am doing."

Table 3: Factor 1 - Outspoken Renegade

No.	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2
02	I don't consider myself rebellious, but rather doing the right thing.	+5	+5
21	I see myself as a person who thinks outside the box.	+5	+1
07	Having a vision of what change looks like energizes my willingness to fight for it.	+4	+3
13	What is outside the norm is valuable to me and I feel it is my responsibility to bring this to my students.	+4	+2
03	I sometimes give of myself at the expense of my own well-being.	+3	+1
28	I am proactive in fighting for change. It is a passion for me.	+3	-2

No.	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2
44	I have a subversive streak within me that allows me to act according to my principles.	+3	0
01	After awhile, I just want to give into the pressure of conforming.	-3	+1
35	I'm concerned the price of raising my voice is not worth my efforts.	-3	0
37	I deliberately resist the status quo.	-3	-5
18	It is difficult for me to disobey authority on my own and need to feel supported by others.	-4	0
26	I'd rather follow the rules than face the consequences.	-4	+1
17	After awhile I just don't want to fight any more for what I think is right if it means I'll be standing alone.	-5	+1
33	I just want to stay in my room and don't speak out of fear of getting in trouble.	-5	-1

Participant 1, in his written comments, personally related to the notion of one's vision being energizing to continue to fight for change. He stated that, "rather than groping in the darkness, I find moving ahead linked with an outcome" [the vision] as being possible and perceive this as beneficial for all." This vision is coupled with acting according to one's principles (44: +3). The belief that one is not rebellious but rather "doing the right thing" (2: +5) is linked with being proactive in fighting for change (28: +3) as well as the willingness to disregard one's fears in speaking out one's views, despite potential consequences (33: -5). Participant 15 explained his perspective regarding the concept of doing the right thing:

> I think that the clamor towards CCSS [Common Core State Standards] and 'rigor' for students has made many people lose sight of what is good, right and true for our students. When I advocate for my students, it may be perceived as being a rebel when I think it is doing what is right for my students.

Participant 22 responded to statement #2 (I don't consider myself rebellious, but rather doing the right thing: +5) in terms of the educational system and how this has affected her. "I feel that the public education system is broken…It needs to change and I can't stand by anymore." In similar fashion, participant 26 explained he does not "want to be a rebel," but firmly believes that what he is doing in his teaching is best for the students, and that what education policymakers are doing "is wrong."

> I have followed "educational leaders" long enough to know that they are trying the same thing over and over again and expecting better results. I have waited long enough for them [policymakers] to give me just a glimpse of steering us in the right direction and they are not. This last year was the final straw.

In similar fashion, participant 23 expressed why she disagrees with statement #18 (-4) regarding if she finds it difficult to disobey authority. She discussed it in terms of her daughters, as they are in the same school system in which she teaches. "It was difficult at first [disobeying authority] because my daughters are in my district…but since it [educational changes] is also impacting their education, I have to disobey and do the right thing."

Two statements were key in deciding the identifying label for Factor 1, in conjunction with the participants' written responses and follow-up interviews. Negated were statements # 35 (I'm concerned the price of raising my voice is not worth my efforts: -3 ranking) and #33 (I just want to stay in my room and don't speak out of fear of getting in trouble: -5 ranking). Outspoken Renegades will speak out and do not allow fear to silence their voices. In particular, one key informant for Factor 1 with whom we spoke in the follow-up phone interviews provided multiple examples of speaking out within her school district and the State. She was summoned to her administrator's office after posting several letters to her local paper and was told that she needed to "cease and desist" in these actions. She was also told to "shut up" during a faculty meeting, and noted that for several months she called the White House every Monday to voice her opinion. She also explained she was active with her union and attended a rally at the New York State capital to protest high-stakes testing (in June 2013).

Outspoken Renegades viewed themselves as having a "subversive streak" that allowed for acting according to one's principles (44: +3). This trend towards fighting for what is deemed right indicated that these individuals were not afraid and would continue to speak out despite risk. This is further buttressed by statement #17 (After a while, I just don't want to fight any more for what I think is right if it means I'll be standing alone), ranked at -5. The comments that participants shared regarding this statement are powerful. Participant 7 explained in her post-sorting commentary that "sometimes you must stand alone in order to support change. If everyone was afraid of standing alone, there would be no one standing at all." Participant 23 noted, "I will never stop fighting. I have been warned." As participant 20 stated, "the fight may not be easy, but it is necessary and worth it."

Outspoken Renegades also indicate a type of educator who is comfortable with and believes it is necessary to articulate his or her views in the workplace and/or the larger political arena. Actions are justified by outrage at current educational policies based on one's vision of what education should be and what is perceived as best for one's students. Moreover, this factor type is driven by a sense of doing what they feel is right for their students and the profession of education, despite the challenges and any potential repercussions.

Factor Two: Quiet Renegade

Eight participants out of 26 were statistically aligned with this factor. Very much like Factor 1, these individuals did not see themselves as a rebellious renegade. While they shared some qualities with Factor 1, this factor was indicative of those who acted quietly and not overtly. The participants grouped in this factor noted that emotional support and encouragement from like-minded colleagues provided them the strength and energy to continue to work for change (27: +5; My like-minded colleagues give me strength and energy to continue doing what I do), indicating that collegial support is desired when acting for change in accordance to one's principles.

Participant 6 explained in her post-sorting narrative the importance of such support. "…while I may not be the first to speak out, having someone to share ideas with, to remind you that you're not the only one thinking a certain way, is encouraging and reaffirming." This sentiment was echoed by participant #8. "Naturally, a person feels validated and strengthened by like-minded colleagues." Unlike Factor 1, a key distinction for Quiet Renegades was the preference to go unnoticed in one's resistance (22: +4; I resist quietly in ways that I know make a difference, but go unnoticed by others). Participant 18 explained in her post-sorting narrative that she does resist, but

in ways that would not be overtly seen. She expressed her need for quiet resistance due to the potential of experiencing repercussions. "I sometimes fear the consequences of big actions to make a difference, but I feel that some actions are better than no actions."

Table 4: Factor 2 - Quiet Renegade

No.	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2
02	I don't consider myself rebellious, but rather doing the right thing.	+5	+5
27	My like-minded colleagues give me strength and energy to continue doing what I do.	+2	+5
22	I resist quietly in ways that I know make a difference but go unnoticed by others.	0	+4
07	Having a vision of what change looks like energizes my willingness to fight for it.	+4	+3
25	Sometimes I need to step back and regroup before I can continue to be the one that fights back.	+1	+3
31	When I change my own teaching practices to meet the needs that are unaddressed, I help the whole system around me to evolve and adapt to new challenges.	+2	+3
34	I feel it is my role to "rock the boat" to make things better.	0	-3
40	Sometimes I act without thinking too much about the consequences.	-1	-3
41	There is a sense of mistrust with colleagues when I go against the norm.	0	-3
13	I am punished by administration for my actions.	-2	-4
14	My administration tries to keep us from uniting on causes that challenge established ways of doing things.	-1	-4
24	I am described as bucking the system.	-2	-5
37	I deliberately resist the status quo.	-3	-5

In contrast to Outspoken Renegades, Quiet Renegades are mindful of consequences, as seen with the overall rejection of acting without thinking (40: -3). Participant 18 stated that "the consequences of my actions are the first things I consider." Based on her post-sorting responses, participant 24 was more outwardly activist compared to the others who statistically loaded on Factor 2. For example, she stated she is the one in her small school district who speaks at union meetings questioning the purpose of testing, will be "the 'one' " on staff who raises her hand when they have Professional Development workshops, and perceives herself as the "lone wolf." However, she refrains from more overt renegade behavior due to lack of like-minded colleagues. "I would be apt to participate in a walk-out or other job action if I were part of a district where there were 100s [of teachers]."

In decided contrast to Outspoken Renegades, the preference to go unnoticed in one's resistance was coupled with an outright rejection of perceiving oneself as deliberately bucking the system (24: -5) as well as the need to not be seen as a deliberate resistor of the status quo (37: -5). In participant 6's case, she explained that "fear of the repercussions" kept her from wanting to being perceived as one who deliberately resists. She continued, "...or else I've been aptly programmed to follow the rules." This individual also explained in response to statement #27 (+5) her need for collegial

support. "While I may not be the first to speak out, having someone to share ideas with, to remind you that you're not the only one thinking a certain way, is encouraging and reaffirming." This individual may be wary of consequences, but she still prefers to align herself with likeminded, supportive colleagues.

Post-sorting comments from Quiet Renegades emphasizing the preference to remain inconspicuous while acting as a change agent include the following by participants 16 and 13. In response to statement #34 (-3), participant 16 articulated the following: "I do not usually rock the boat in order to make them [the situation] better. If I wanted to make changes I think I have a way to make it changed without causing too much commotion." Participant 13 likewise stated, "I believe a person can be strong without making a scene."

Quiet Renegades felt quite strongly about needing "small wins" when acting for change (36: +4). Participant 24 explained. "The 'small wins,' like having a colleague FINALLY [sic] ask me about my opinions, are vital to my persistence." Small wins, the authors suggest, links to the desire to be covert, not be perceived as "bucking the system" (22: +4), and resisting in ways that go unnoticed by others but make a difference (27: +5) when engaged in renegade behavior.

In common with Outspoken Renegades, Quiet Renegades are energized by their vision of what change would look like (7: +4). Participant 16 explained, "I think I have a great ideology of what teaching can look like and what is the best for my students. I want this ideal world." The need to have a vision regarding change is discussed further in the Consensus Statements section.

Although the goal of effecting educational change is the same, in contrast to Outspoken Renegades, the central characteristic of Quiet Renegade is that of engaging in quiet resistance when acting as a change agent. This quiet resistance includes acts that tend to go unnoticed and do not draw attention to the individual. Quiet Renegades prefer this form of quiet resistance in order to avoid repercussions as they weigh the risks and costs of speaking out.

Consensus Statements

Consensus statements are those which do not distinguish between any pair of factors; that is, have the same degree of agreement or disagreement. Two statements held in agreement by the two factors are worthy of discussion. These are statements #2 (I don't consider myself rebellious, but rather doing the right thing) and #7 (Having a vision of what change looks like energizes my willingness to fight for it); this statement was ranked as +4 (Factor 1) and +3 (Factor 2). Statement #2 was ranked on the composite factor arrays as +5 for both Factors 1 and 2. In the online sorting comments section, participant 3, who statistically aligned with Factor 1, explained her rationale regarding this statement:

> I don't know that anything I do in my classroom is very risky. I ask kids to write about what matters to them and read books that will help them understand the world. I want them to grow into thoughtful, engaged citizens of the world. That seems like the right thing to do.

Although this particular participant may self-perceive that these actions taken with her students are "not very risky," the underlying theme for not only this particular participant but for both factor types is that one acts in alignment with one's beliefs, sense of self, and moral purpose (Day, 2004; Fullan, 1993). This alignment is that which gives teachers meaning and purpose in life in terms of their students, their profession, and their identity as a change agent (Sachs, 2003).

In his written explanation regarding statement #7 (+4), participant 26, who statistically aligned with Outspoken Renegade, stated: "My vision is the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel that is traditional public education. Without my vision, I would not be doing what I am doing." He explained that his focus is on the well-being of his students; by preparing them for when they leave his classroom at the end of the school year, he is acting in their best interest. This, for him, stands in contrast to when he used to "obey" and "trusted" those who made the educational decisions that he had to follow in his teaching, which he no longer does.

Similarly, participant 16, who aligned with Quiet Renegade, wrote: "I think I have a great ideology of what teaching can look like and what is the best for my students. I want this ideal world." Both participants held dear an image of an optimistic, hopeful and productive public education for students. It is this vision that sustained them in their change agent behavior.

McLaren (1991) suggests that vision, what he calls "the arch of social dreaming" (p. 411), allows for individuals to imagine a desired future in order to develop a plan to achieve it. This is not solely a desired, envisioned future for oneself, but a vision for a desired future that encompasses society as a whole with the goal of transformation. In the case of public education, the participants' goal is to reconcile their understanding of how to address their students' educational needs as well as the future of public education as a whole within the context of currently mandated educational policies.

These change agents cannot be successful in their actions without their personally-held vision, as this is what creates the bridge to enact meaningful change. The renegades in this study found that having a vision was vital. It provided them with both hope and a goal to work toward for a better future, and is critical for progress – for their students, their colleagues, and the profession as a whole.

Focus Groups and their Potential Factor Alignment

Based on the narratives collected from each focus group, the researchers inferred how the focus group participants as a collective would fit into the factors described above. Focus group M, the rural group, most closely aligned with Factor 2, the Quiet Renegade. Many of the participants' comments reflected a need to consider consequences and act quietly, almost behind the scenes. It is possible that the participants felt this way because they were from a small, seemingly tight-knit school, and did not want to "stand out" from the crowd, thus becoming a potential target when overtly working for change. This focus group spoke of being supportive of one another and, in general, appeared to be very optimistic as a whole. At several points in the conversation, the participants dismissed the verbiage of renegade and opted instead for the descriptor of an individual who acts simply because it is the "right thing to do" because, for them, this is the "norm" and how a professional teacher should be.

Focus group U, the more urban area, most closely aligned with Factor 1, the Outspoken Renegade. During the focus group interview, the teachers were very vocal and direct regarding their "renegade" views, and a number of them appeared to have a hostile relationship with administration while being mostly supportive of one another. Some noted having multiple disagreements with administration, and were very direct and vocal in their negative opinion of actions taken by their administrators. This strained relationship may have had an impact on the teachers to act in a renegade fashion. An additional motivator to speak out may have stemmed from active union involvement by several of the participants. They may have been emboldened by strong union support affiliation.

Discussion

During the two focus group sessions conducted in summer 2012, much debate ensued regarding terms that describe the perceived role regarding teachers who act as change agents in the workplace. The terms renegade, radical, rogue, maverick, rebel and vanguard were some of the terms considered and rejected by each group. When the participants were asked which term resonated best with their understanding of the concept, the discussion focused on the term's perceived connotation. One participant from focus group M noted she felt all of the terms considered were "warrior/militaristic terms." Participants were wary of wording that held any perceived negative association because they did not view their actions as such.

However, a year after the first focus group contact (June 2013), the researchers observed a shift regarding participant perception of the term "renegade" in relation to self-identity and action. This time the term was not rejected by the majority of participants as it was the year prior. When asked again nearly a year and a half later (March 2014), the participants surveyed fully accepted the term as being descriptive of their actions. One participant even offered a few other possible terms, including "subversive."

The course of events that occurred in the educational reform movement and the recent efforts spearheaded by grassroots activist organizations to resist those changes may have helped shape how the participants perceived their identity and the role as a renegade nearly two years after the initial study. Two participants shared that they were comfortable with the term from the start of this project, while others changed their minds. One participant who was aligned with Quiet Renegade explained that she would not want administrators to view her as a renegade, but that she really liked the term and felt it applied to her. The same participant also suggested the term "revolutionary" and stated she did not "like being told what to do."

Hope and Happiness

An interesting and unexpected theme emerged during the course of the study. Some of the focus group participants reflected on their life as a teacher, and mentioned hope and happiness. These were scant mentions at the time of the focus group conversations. It was not until the post-Q sort narratives as well as follow-up interview discussions with key informants a year later where the linkage between one's actions as a renegade having an influence on one's sense of hope and happiness, both personally and professionally, started to become evident.

Hope is not the same as optimism. Hope is a yearning for a better future than what is in the present, is grounded in one's contextual reality, and includes a recognition and acceptance that the outcome is uncertain (Lynch, 1965). Hope is also existential in nature in that it provides meaning and purpose in life (Levine, 2013). Research has shown that happiness and hope are integral to the teaching profession. "[T]o teach is inevitably to be in the hope and happiness business, for hope and happiness are essential conditions for life, living, and learning…" (Bullough, 2011, p. 17). When one is in alignment with one's values, ideals and goals, such as the self-defined identity of a renegade teacher committed to working towards positive change in one's profession despite the obstacles, feelings of happiness as well as one's hope increases (Day, 2004; Levine, 2013). "Hope serves as a basis for remaining not only positive but actively engaged in life" (Bullough, 2011, p. 17).

Greater happiness follows a life of engagement, of being deeply connected to and invested in others and their well-being. Happiness, in the context which it will be used

for this study, is not defined as a simple emotional state, but rather linked to Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, translated as "human flourishing" (Gore, 2010; Seligman, 2011). This concept is closely related to the "fulfilling of one's full potential" (Bullough, 2011, p. 21), and is imbued with hope.

For example, some of the teachers interviewed connected both hope and happiness to the direct work of teaching and made a point of isolating their personal experiences in the classroom from that of administration, policy and politics. One participant from focus group U explained, "...they [the kids] do give you hope. If you subtract the politics and the administration and you're just dealing with kids...it does give me hope that the students do value teachers." According to Seligman (2011), "Well-being cannot exist in your own head: well-being is a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships and accomplishment" (p. 25). The work of teaching young people provides this sense of fulfilment and hope for a number of the participants.

Even while the current educational trends are to deprofessionalize teachers, young people and parents still support teachers. Evidence of this developed in the form of a social media trend known as #evaluatethat (via Twitter). Teachers from across the United States have posted thousands of examples of "tweeted" support from students and parents, accompanied by the hashtag identifier. In addition, they posted examples of what the authors would consider renegade change agent behavior. These Facebook posts, Pinterest pins and Twitter Tweets "point out the countless ways in which teachers help their students that cannot be assessed by student standardized test scores or other traditional methods of evaluation" (Strauss, 2014, para. 1).

Linking the factor results to the focus group commentary, one of the participants from focus group M noted that following one's principles influenced her happiness because she felt a sense of belonging. "I think part of being happy is feeling like you're a part of something, belonging, connecting part of a group, being part of the family." This relationship between action and happiness suggests a linkage to identity formation for Factor 2, those who are Quiet Renegades. This also connects with the theme of the need for collegial support, as seen in the consensus statements.

Of the participants who completed the Q sorting, those who mentioned or alluded to hope in the narrative comments all fit within factor one, the Outspoken Renegade. Participant 1 discussed moving toward outcomes that are possible, and participant 14 viewed hope in a much larger perspective. She decided to teach because "I desire to be a part of cultural change within my communities and country, and I believe strongly in education's place at the forefront of cultural change."

Risk and Frustration

Two additional themes that emerged from the focus groups and post-sort interviews were those of risk and frustration. In many of the post-Q sort comments, participants mentioned weighing risks before speaking out or acting as a renegade. For instance, participant 18 noted that "the consequences of my actions are the first thing I consider in regards to anything," while participant 16 expressed, "If I wanted to make changes I think I have a way to make it changed without causing too much commotion." These two participants statistically loaded on Factor 2, the Quiet Renegade.

Discussion of risk was echoed in the focus groups and interviews. Almost all of the teachers who participated in the online Q sort and the follow-up interviews remarked that some element of risk was aligned with a decision to weigh as a cost of acting out. Most appeared to continue to act despite the perceived risks and cost, or altered their actions to fight back but with minimal risk. Others were more direct. Participant 22, an

Outspoken Renegade, noted that "I'd rather do right and face the consequences" and felt that "too many people keep their true thoughts to themselves." Participant 23, also an Outspoken Renegade, was very direct and stated that "I will never stop fighting. I have been warned. I have been called names. I have even lost friends, but I will never stop. If it is bad for kids, I won't shut my mouth."

Frustration, much like risk, was mentioned throughout the post-Q sort comments, and was echoed in some of the interviews. The frustrations regarding administration were many, as well as frustration regarding education policy and state procedures. One participant noted that teachers are "fighting on so many fronts," and a colleague in the same focus group immediately added, "Some of the attacks can get personal, but you just have to find a way to overcome it."

One concern was raised by two participants in their post-sorting comments: the issue of tenure. Participant 16, a Quiet Renegade, explained. "I think that the fear, especially being untenured, leaves me feeling like I have to do what is expected and what will keep my job. I wish I could do more things outside of the box if I didn't always think parents or administrators would criticize my ideas." Participant 12, also a Quiet Renegade, expressed her discomfort with statement #20 (I am willing to put my name out there to voice concerns on behalf of my colleagues). She noted that "sometimes I do not feel that my particular district and administration is open to teacher concerns. I am a new and young teacher who is not tenured, therefore I do not always feel comfortable putting myself out there."

As discussed in the Limitations section below, at the time the authors began this study the role that tenure might play in one's renegade behavior was not considered due to oversight. Given these participants' comments, the role of tenure on renegade behavior will be explored as the authors continue their research.

Reflections

Of note are participants' responses to one of the follow-up interview questions, which asked those interviewed by either e-mail or telephone how their outlook regarding renegade behaviors may have changed since the inception of the study. Almost all noted they had changed their views in various ways.

Two participants explained they have become more vocal in their school setting because of the reforms and its effects on the teachers, staff and students. The treatment of teachers by the State-imposed educational reforms may have pushed these individuals to action as they refused to become what Seligman called "housebroken by politics" (2011, p. 106). Similarly, another participant expressed that she is more "aggressive" in her actions connected to the political side of education; she now spends much of her non-teaching time in letter writing, tweeting and attending rallies. She was reprimanded by her principal for these actions, and told to stop writing letters to the editor and posting on social media sites. She noted that as a result of this experience, she has a "new awareness" of the relationship she has with her school administration and what is and is not acceptable in their views. This has not dissuaded her from engaging in activism; she is just more discrete.

Even those participants who were not motivated to act politically noted that the year was much more emotionally taxing than years prior due to the various educational changes. One explained that she has shifted from actively speaking out her thoughts to becoming quiet "in order to prevent stress." Another participant noted that she has now retreated into what she calls her "turtle shell" due to "the many skewed, distorted and contradictory views of teaching…When they [those from the State Department of

Education who are enacting education reform] figure out what they want, they can let me know." She continued that she still engages in renegade behavior by teaching "the way I know is good, right and true for my students." She has pulled back from Outspoken Renegade behavior at this point in time.

Given this past year's various and often contentious educational reforms, as evidenced by the follow-up interviews a number of the study's participants have shifted in how they think about their role as teachers. While some retreated from public view to avoid attention, others responded by becoming more vocal and direct in their activist, renegade actions.

Limitations

The focus participants were from two upstate New York State regions, the first site being a small, rural area, and the second site a mid-size, urban city. Participants from the rural site were all from the school district that hosted the site and as a result were all rural teachers. The second site was comprised of teachers who came from several school districts in the area, and included slightly more diversity in terms of the size of the community in which the individuals taught.   The researchers had contacts (site coordinators) who arranged for participants at both sites. The individuals at each site who chose to participate were perhaps motivated to do so by their personal relationship to the site coordinator. This personal relationship between the site coordinator and the participants may have influenced not only their motivation to participate in the focus groups, but also the information and personal vignettes that were shared.

Regarding the demographics of those who participated in the online portion of the study (sorting of statements), tenure status was not considered. This was an oversight of the researchers. The demographics presented do reflect years of service; however, those years are not an indicator of tenure, as years-in-service may be accumulated from multiple teaching positions held at a variety of schools. In the post-sorting comments, two participants remarked that they were relatively new, untenured teachers and considered the level of workplace protection to their ability to act safely as a renegade. Tenure and its influence on teachers' behavior as a change agent will be addressed in a future study.
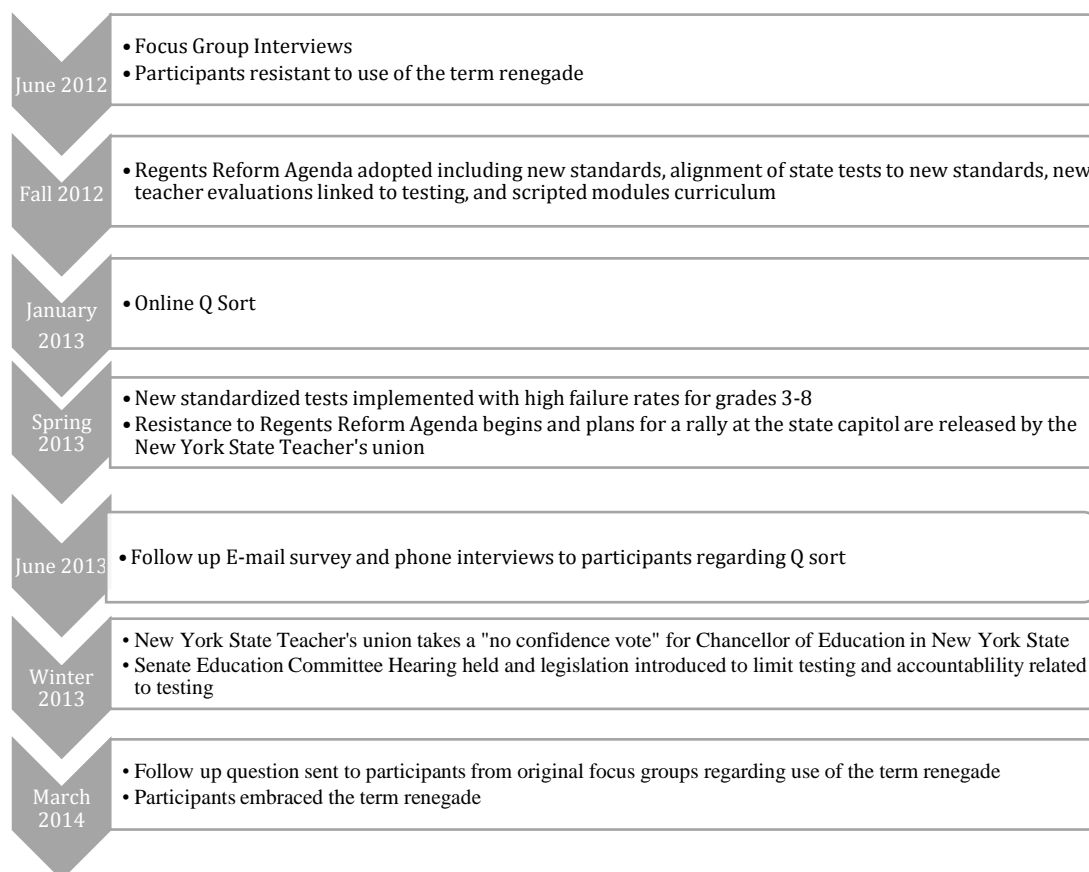
For this study, the researchers were and still are at a crossroads between the emic and etic in that, as prior public school teachers, the researchers, who are both currently working at the university level, have insight regarding school culture and teacher identity. This may have influenced the interpretation of data. To address this potential problem, the study's key informants read the researchers' data interpretation to see if it resonated with the participants' perspectives.

There were educational changes that occurred during the time of the study that may have had an impact on how the participants responded. Had the study been conducted a year earlier, the responses may have been quite different. The timing was not part of the research goals. However, after the study began, a huge shift in New York State educational reform had a dramatic impact on public school teachers (see Figure 1).

The educational reforms included the adoption of new curricular standards – the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), whose implementation began the fall after the focus group meetings occurred. In addition, the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) teacher evaluation system was instituted state-wide, which tied teacher performance to student test scores, and, simultaneously, new exams were put in place statewide that would measure student learning connected to the new standards. These

changes in educational policy had an impact on how the focus group participants initially responded in June 2012 regarding their perspectives of the term "renegade," to a decided shift the following year, as evidenced in a follow-up interview with the key informants. As Seligman notes, what "people report is itself determined by how good we *feel* [italics in original] at the very moment we are asked the question" (2011, p. 13).

Figure 1: Time Line of Study and Parallel Educational Reform Agenda

June 2012	• Focus Group Interviews • Participants resistant to use of the term renegade
Fall 2012	• Regents Reform Agenda adopted including new standards, alignment of state tests to new standards, new teacher evaluations linked to testing, and scripted modules curriculum
January 2013	• Online Q Sort
Spring 2013	• New standardized tests implemented with high failure rates for grades 3-8 • Resistance to Regents Reform Agenda begins and plans for a rally at the state capitol are released by the New York State Teacher's union
June 2013	• Follow up E-mail survey and phone interviews to participants regarding Q sort
Winter 2013	• New York State Teacher's union takes a "no confidence vote" for Chancellor of Education in New York State • Senate Education Committee Hearing held and legislation introduced to limit testing and accountablility related to testing
March 2014	• Follow up question sent to participants from original focus groups regarding use of the term renegade • Participants embraced the term renegade

An additional limitation was that while the researchers had numerous participants in the focus groups, not all focus group members opted to participate in the online Q sort. Moreover, there was a low response rate for the follow-up reflection a year after the study began. Eighteen participants that provided a contact email were approached via e-mail and only five responded. The lack of replies could be connected to the timing of the inquiry, which was during the participants' summer break, and they may have been vacationing. A final potential limitation was the lack of gender equity of focus group U, which was comprised entirely of women. This group was not purposely constructed to represent a female perspective; it was an outcome of who chose to participate. The lack of male representation may have had an influence on the participants' responses.

Conclusion

The authors suggest that the study's exploratory findings show there are two distinct types of renegades in the workplace of teaching: Outspoken Renegades and Quiet Renegades. Each of these types acts out of a sense of vision regarding public education and the teaching profession, and what is perceived as right. The principal difference is in how the renegades act. The Outspoken Renegades are more likely to speak and act

publically about their concerns, whereas the Quiet Renegades prefer to go unnoticed and act in ways that do not draw attention to themselves.

It is also suggested that there is a relationship between renegade teachers' self-reported happiness and hope and strength of commitment to one's values and ideals, despite the challenges they face. The authors' own hope regarding the significance of this study is that the exploratory results will help empower teachers in their self-identification as a renegade, to be confident in their self-chosen role as a positive change agent, and strengthen their commitment to their vision of a better future for self, students, and the education profession.

The authors look forward to continuing to examine the changes in the perspectives of teachers as the various Race to the Top educational reforms continue to be a lightning rod in New York State public schools.

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Appendix: Factor Scores

No.	Statement	Factor 1 Outspoken Renegade	Factor 2 Quiet Renegade
1.	After a while, I just want to give in to the pressure of conforming.	-3	+1
2.	I don't consider myself rebellious, but rather doing the right thing.	+5	+5
3.	I sometimes give of myself at the expense of my own well-being.	+3	+1
4.	The administration tries to stand in my way, but I keep persisting in spite of them.	-2	-1
5.	It is important that I feel a sense of belonging with my colleagues who also share the same values at me.	0	+2
6.	I would be more revolutionary if I wasn't afraid of the risk.	-2	+2

No.	Statement	Factor 1 Outspoken Renegade	Factor 2 Quiet Renegade
7.	Having a vision of what change looks like energizes my willingness to fight for it.	+4	+3
8.	I refuse to be a victim at work.	+2	0
9.	I would rather vocalize dissent and resist than conform.	+1	0
10.	I sometimes feel like an outsider at work because of my actions.	0	-2
11.	My compassion for my students sometimes makes me impulsive in my desires to make a difference.	+2	-1
12.	I am punished by administration for my actions.	-2	-4
13.	What is outside the norm is valuable to me and I feel it is my responsibility to bring this to my students.	+4	+2
14.	My administration tries to keep us from uniting on causes that challenge established ways of doing things.	-1	-4
15.	I seek out allies for support.	-1	+2
16.	I organize collective action for change.	-1	-2
17.	After a while I just don't want to fight any more for what I think is right if it means I'll be standing alone.	-5	+1
18.	It is difficult for me to disobey authority on my own and need to feel supported by others.	-4	0
19.	I crave being connected to a larger purpose.	+1	+1
20.	I am willing to put my name "out there" to voice concerns on behalf of my colleagues	2	0
21.	I see myself as a person who thinks outside the box.	+5	+1
22.	I resist quietly in ways that I know make a difference but go unnoticed by others.	0	+4
23.	How strong a person is when standing up against the backlash for acting outside the norm defines how strong one's character is.	0	0
24.	I am described as "bucking the system."	-2	-5
25.	Sometimes I need to step back and regroup before I can continue to be the one that fights back.	+1	+3
26.	I'd rather follow the rules than face the consequences.	-4	+1
27.	My like-minded colleagues give me strength and energy to continue doing what I do.	+2	+5
28.	I am proactive in fighting for change. It is a passion for me.	+3	-2
29.	I feel pressure to conform at work.	-1	-1
30.	By speaking out I risk damage to my reputation.	-1	-2
31.	When I change my own teaching practices to meet the needs that are unaddressed, I help the whole system around me to evolve and adapt to new challenges.	+2	+3
32.	When acting for change, I only trust others who are willing to take the risk.	-2	-1
33.	I just stay in my room and don't speak out of fear of getting in trouble.	-5	-1
34.	I feel it is my role to "rock the boat" to make things better.	0	-3
35.	I'm concerned the price of raising my voice is not worth my efforts.	-3	0
36.	I thrive on the small wins when I act for change.	+1	+4
37.	I deliberately resist the status quo.	-3	-5

No.	Statement	Factor 1 Outspoken Renegade	Factor 2 Quiet Renegade
38. When trying to make a change for the better, I try not to take the criticism from my colleagues personally.		0	+2
39. My administration does not like people that speak out.		+1	-2
40. Sometimes I act without thinking too much about the consequences		-1	-3
41. There is a sense of mistrust with colleagues when I go against the norm		0	-3
42. I can take the heat from my administration for voicing my opinions.		+1	-1
43. I turn personal threats to my professional self into opportunities to change.		0	0
44. I have a subversive streak within me that allows me to act according to my principles.		+3	0