REPRODUCTION OF POSSIBILITY:
A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF A FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

Heather Coffey
Reproduction of possibility:
A Critical case study of a first-year english teacher
(Under the direction of James Trier)

Critical literacy has increasingly become a topic of research in education over the past twenty

years. Implemented as national curriculum in Australia in the late 1980s, this form of

literacy has gained popularity in both teacher education programs and classrooms throughout

the United States since the mid-1990s. This study explores the experiences of one first-year

English language arts teacher who facilitated the development of critical literacy with her

Advanced Placement Language and Composition students by using critical pedagogy. The

project seeks to demonstrate how one practitioner defines and implements a curriculum and

teaching pedagogy to cultivate critical literacy skills with students in a low performing high

school. At the heart of this case study are classroom observations, teacher and student

interviews, and artifacts from teacher generated lessons that represent how teachers might

develop critical literacy and how students respond to this form of critical pedagogy. The aim

of this project is to provide a voice for a first-year teacher devoted to empowering her

students through the development of critical literacy and to demonstrate how students

participated in critical analysis of social, political, and cultural structures that influence the

mainstream American media outlets. The results of this study relate directly to teacher

education and professional development for both in-service and pre-service teachers and also

inform the field of teacher education in the areas of mentoring novice teachers, critical

literacy, and English language arts methodology. This study is predicated on the assumption that all children should have access to curriculum materials and instruction that is both representative of their cultural background and engages them in acquisition of critical literacy skills and mastery of dominant discourses.

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CHAPTER 1

"Yes We Can"

But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope. Now the hopes of the little girl who goes to a crumbling school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of LA; we will remember that there is something happening in America; that we are not as divided as our politics suggests; that we are one people; we are one nation; and together, we will begin the next great chapter in the American story with three words that will ring from coast to coast; from sea to shining sea: Yes We Can.

Will.i.Am, "Yes We Can."

In December of 2001, the United Nations adopted a resolution that designated 2003-2012 the "Literacy Decade." With the justification that, "the nations of the world recognise that the promotion of literacy is in the interest of all, as part of efforts towards peace, respect and exchange in a globalising world," the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has provided millions of dollars in funding to aid empirical research, train literacy facilitators, develop inter-community networks, monitor and evaluate current and future literacy programs, create policy on literacy in developing countries, and implement new, researched literacy initiatives. These efforts are a direct result of the lack of development of literacy skills of poor and marginalized populations throughout the world; the United Nations has focused on literacy in this decade under the maxim: "Literacy for all: voice for all, learning for all."

In a series of international statements on literacy, the United Nations (2004) continues to ascribe to an evolving notion of literacy as a "key element of lifelong learning in its lived

context" (p. 10). Connecting this plural notion of literacy with citizenship, cultural identity, socio-economic development, human rights and equity, these declarations recommend a context-specific and flexible program that focuses on the individual experience of the learner. In 2003, UNESCO adopted a new definition of literacy which emphasizes "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 13). Viewed as a multi-dimensional and dynamic concept, literacy, in this sense must incorporate the plurality of international cultures and address the issue of how dominant and subordinate messages are perpetuated in every society. An effective literacy program would facilitate the development of the critical skills necessary to participate in the interpretation of dominant literacies in order to expose them as unrepresentative of the majority of cultures and backgrounds. In the educational arena, the development of the skills that would enable students to participate in the analysis of dominant discourses is referred to as *critical* literacy.

Ernest Morrell (2008), a former high school English teacher and current professor of teacher education at the University of California at Los Angeles, proposes there is a correlation between this "(dominant/functional/informational) literacy development" and "positive social and economic outcomes" (p. 2). Morrell also suggests that those students who "acquire and master dominant literacies have a greater likelihood of attending universities and earning higher paying jobs" (p. 2). In fact, data from the US Depaartment of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2006) suggests that those students whose parents earned at least an undergraduate degree outscored peers whose parents had a high school education or less by more than 30 points on the reading, writing, and mathematical portions of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP).

Moreover, data from that same year of testing reveals that there also exists an achievement gap between students who qualify for free and reduced lunch under the National School Lunch Program and those who are ineligible for the program based on socioeconomic status. According to the US Department of Education (2006), fourth grade students who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program typically score over twenty points less on the NAEP reading and mathematics tests than those students whose families reported a higher income. As indicated by the results of the eighth grade assessment, this disparity in academic achievement soars even higher as students progress through school. These statistics suggest that students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less academically proficient than peers whose guardians are more financially stable. Thus, students whose parents make less money, or who are living in poverty, are at more of an academic disadvantage than those students whose parents earn an income that makes them ineligible for the free and reduced lunch program. This data supports Morrell's (2008) claim that those who are able to acquire these dominant literacies improve their social and economic standing in addition to providing similar opportunities for their children.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) also argues that the traditional curriculum and teaching methodology excludes students who are members of culturally marginalized groups. Ladsen-Billings (1994) writes that "no challenge has been more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of African American students. Burdened with a history that includes the denial of education, separate and unequal education, and relegation to unsafe, substandard inner-city schools, the quest for quality education remains an illusive dream" (p. ix). Although the results from the NAEP (2006) writing, math, and reading

tests indicate that achievement gaps between White and Black students narrowed in 2007 as compared to previous years, data indicates that the needs of minority students in American schools are still not being met.

Lisa Delpit (1995) suggests that students of color often reject literacy (the traditional definition) because they feel that the dominant literacy discourses "reject" them (p. 299). Students of color often fail to participate and invest in education because the material and pedagogical practices do not take their culture and interests into account. Delpit explains that teachers must "empower and politicize" (p. 300) disenfranchised students through a literacy program that helps students to acquire the dominant literacies.

This line of research supports the argument that our most disadvantaged populations must not only acquire the dominant literacies in order to fully participate in the modern globalized society, but that the curriculum and pedagogy that dominates the American public school system must be reformed to be more inclusive of all members of a pluralistic democratic society. This theory of acquiring dominant literacies through a more critical and emancipatory pedagogy will be discussed in more detail in this dissertation.

The Need for Development of Critical Literacy

Having mentioned the dynamic concept of literacy and the need to engage students in the development of skills to participate in a pluralistic society, it is now vital that I explain the importance of developing these skills in the educational setting, more specifically within the larger discourse concerning the teaching of English. Below, I provide the most recent definition of literacy articulated by National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), which is the primary (and largest) association for English educators in the nation.

In February of 2008, the NCTE[1] published a position statement about the changing

needs for literacy in the 21st Century. Similar to the definition provided by UNESCO,

NCTE defines literacy as "a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared

among members of particular groups." The executive committee explains that the

definition of literacy in the 21st Century is constantly changing and that being literate in a

global society requires that people learn to:

- Develop proficiency with the tools of technology;
- Build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally;
- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
- Manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;
- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media texts; and
- Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments (NCTE, 2008).

English teachers engaging in critical pedagogy in the 21st Century have the potential to

address all of these goals, in addition to facilitating the development of critical literacy

with their students. In sum, critical literacy challenges students to examine messages of

power while developing and engaging in the skills listed above.   I argue that teachers who

foster the acquisition of dominant literacies through the development of critical literacy

skills, enable their students to engage with and master the literacy promoted by the NCTE,

while creating a space where students' voices are valued and appreciated.

Support for Novice English Educators

As an English teacher educator, it is my position that teacher education programs

must develop a curriculum and pedagogy to demonstrate how pre-service educators can

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[1]The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), a group dedicated to the improvement of teaching and learning of English language arts across all grade levels, was established in 1911 in order to counter the effects of college entrance requirements on high school English education (www.ncte.org/history).

foster critical literacy development among children. However, using this theory to guide English methods in teacher preparation programs may not be a sufficient means by which to transform schools into sites of "emancipatory education." Peter McLaren (2009), a prominent scholar on critical pedagogy and critical literacy in the United States, explains that in classrooms that emphasize "emancipatory knowledge," students become aware of "how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege" (p. 64). By showing students how to analyze power relations, teachers create spaces where "social justice, equality, and empowerment" (p. 64) are the foundation of the pedagogy and content. Without having a support system in place when entering their own classrooms, novice teachers may revert to traditional teaching methods and curriculum. In order to transfer this theory into practice, I suggest that novice teachers must be provided with mentors who also support this pedagogy that promotes the acquisition of dominant literacy skills for all students.

All too often, novice teachers graduate from teacher education programs never to be heard from again by their university professors and supervisors. As they become involved in the daily minutia of teaching, which inevitably includes creating engaging and challenging lessons, grading papers, filling out paperwork, serving on committees, meeting with parents, and trying to keep their heads above the rising waters, they may quickly forget the theories they learned in their teacher preparation programs. In efforts to support novice teachers through their induction phase, schools provide mentors who are charged with guiding and supporting novice teachers through the first few years of teaching. Lily Orland (2001) describes a mentor teacher as a person who is usually a veteran teacher "who supports, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less-experienced person in order to promote the latter's

professional and personal development" (p. 75). Essentially, the goal of mentoring novice teachers is to support and improve the quality of their teaching (Holmes Group, 1990) and to engage new teachers in professional development that sustains effective teaching practices (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). According to the US Department of Education, survey data collected in 2002 reveals that 66 percent of teachers who were formally mentored by another teacher felt that their classroom teaching improved the first year (NCES, 2002). This information strongly supports the need for mentor programs for novice teachers.

Despite an obvious need for this support structure, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002) reports that over half of novice teachers are assigned mentors from outside their content area. In fact, on average, only 47 percent of public school teachers work with a mentor teacher in the same subject area. These mentors can usually provide advice about following school procedures and navigating the political demands of teaching, but unfortunately are unable to contribute to the development of curriculum and pedagogy within the new teachers' discipline area. Consequently, these novice teachers often do not receive the necessary support needed to bridge the gap between content area educational theory and classroom practice and as a result, struggle to survive that first year.

Without a strong support system in place, new teachers are leaving the profession at record rates. According to an article about teacher attrition, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), "nearly a thousand teachers leave the field of teaching" each day. In our nation there is a massive teacher shortage, and the new teacher attrition rate is staggering. Several studies reveal that new teachers are far more likely than experienced teachers to leave the profession (Serpell & Bozeman, 1999; Ingersoll, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Strong, Fletcher, & Villar, 2004). Based on the data, I propose there may be an opportunity

for teacher education programs to work in collaboration with school districts to provide assistance with mentoring new teachers throughout their induction period.

In addition to needing a support system throughout the induction phase of teaching, I argue that pre-service educators must be prepared to enter the profession equipped to develop engaging curriculum and that includes transformative, culturally-relevant pedagogy. Although novice teachers may not be prepared to "engage in small subversive acts" (J. Kozol, personal communication, September 22, 2008) in their first year, a mentor would likely be able to demonstrate how new teachers can carefully create opportunities that challenge the traditional educational model. Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2004) supports this need for novice teachers to observe how veteran teachers are able to engage their students while "teaching against the grain," (p. 24) which she suggests is:

> embedded in the culture and history of teaching at individual schools and in the biographies of teachers and their collaborative efforts to alter curricula, raise questions about common practices, and resist inappropriate decisions. These relationships must be explored in schools in the company of experienced teachers who are themselves engaged in complex, situation-specific, and sometimes losing struggles to work against the grain. (pp. 24-25)

As a scholar of critical literacy and former teacher, I argue that the inclusion of courses that address multicultural education, culturally-responsive teaching practices, and critical literacy may have benefits for the improvement of academic performance for children of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minority backgrounds. Moreover, by including critical pedagogical theory and modeling how to engage in this type of pedagogy, I contend that teacher educators offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to engage in transformative, emancipatory practice that has the potential to improve the literacy skills of students and ensure their academic success.

The Study

Acting on my hypotheses about the possibilities of mentoring novice teachers and bridging the gap between educational theory and practice, I conducted research in a high school classroom with one novice English educator over the course of one academic year. By presenting this critical case study, I document that experience and explain how the collection of data and subsequent analysis has implications for the field of teacher education and more importantly, the possibilities for development of critical literacy skills with high school students.

In the summer of 2006, I taught my first course in the Masters of Arts in Teaching MAT) program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This course introduces the basic educational theory and general teaching methods for students entering the program. While teaching this small class of 16 students, I met Tracie,[2] a vivacious, petite, Black woman who had earned her Bachelors of Arts degree in English only one month prior to commencing her graduate studies. On the first day of class, I recognized Tracie as an inquisitive, passionate young woman who was truly committed to becoming a high school English teacher. While teaching this first course in the MAT program, Tracie and I talked often about my experiences in the classroom, and she often shared her ideas for curriculum development in her own classroom. Later, in the fall semester, after I presented information on using literature circles in the high school English classroom to her English methods course, Tracie emailed me a request for any handouts or links to more information on the topic. Over the course of the year-long teaching licensure program, although I was not Tracie's student teaching supervisor, she and I communicated often and developed a

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[2]All names in this manuscript are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of participants.

mentor/protégé relationship, which will be described in more detail in chapters four and five of this dissertation.

The research presented in this dissertation developed because of an opportunity to mentor Tracie as she entered her first year as an English language arts teacher in a high school in Durham, NC. Barely one year after Tracie had been my student, she began teaching in her own classroom, but was not assigned a formal teaching mentor in her content area. Consequently, Tracie asked me to act as her informal mentor to help guide her through her first year of teaching. This request was important to me because it meant that she trusted my professional opinion, and since I remembered the overwhelming nature of my first year of teaching, I was genuinely interested in helping her succeed in that critical first year.

Over the course of one academic year, the relationship between Tracie and I transformed from that of mentor/protégé into a teaching partnership, which I will document and explore throughout this dissertation. More specifically, my work with Tracie eventually became a collaboration focused on the development of three major instructional units explicitly designed to engage students in the acquisition of skills and understanding associated with critical literacy, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

The partnership between Tracie and I developed during the fall semester (September 2007-December 2007), while I observed her Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Composition class, which she felt completely unprepared to teach. During this first semester of school, while I spent several hours a week with the students, we developed a friendly relationship, and they were encouraged to ask me questions when Tracie could not attend to their immediate needs during group assignments. Because the students accepted

me so quickly into their already close-knit community, Tracie also invited me to occasionally discuss topics with which she wasn't completely familiar, work with students during small group interaction, and speak to the students about their experiences both in and outside of school.

During these weekly visits, I rapidly gained status of "trusted person" within the class (Glesne, 2006, p. 49). By the end of that first semester of school, students emailed me about writing assignments and often included me in their class discussions. It quickly became apparent that they both trusted me as both a professional educator and recognized that I was there to assist their teacher. Having the trust of participants in a research study is extremely important because I do not want to take advantage of them, and the participants are likely to share more with me if they feel comfortable with me.

Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

In chapter five, I describe the development of the relationship between Tracie and myself, as well as explain my eventual own role in assisting Tracie in designing and teaching instructional units and lesson plans. It is important to note here that after observing Tracie for one semester, I arrived at a more specific focus for our collaboration, a focus conceptualized at the end of the fall semester, one that I articulated to Tracie during a meeting in November.

During this meeting at a local coffee shop, I asked Tracie about teaching strategies or theory she recalled from her English methods course. She responded that she had been most interested in developing community with her students, critical literacy, cultural studies, and using media in the classroom. However, she admitted that she had not attempted to use any of these with her students because she did not know how to incorporate activities related to

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these theories into the state-mandated curriculum. I had been studying all of these educational theories throughout my doctoral program. During this time, I was particularly interested in the possibility of using critical literacy with high school students. At that point, I began thinking that Tracie's AP English Language and Composition course would be an ideal location for me to initiate my dissertation study. Tracie was a teacher who knew the theory, but was uncertain about how to put the theory into practice, and I was preparing to become a teacher educator, but had not tested the theory about which I had been reading.

During this meeting, I explained that I was also interested in critical literacy and critical pedagogy and wanted to see how both could become central to Tracie's classroom as she attempted to teach the public school curriculum. I mentioned that I saw the benefits of the theory and had also struggled as a novice teacher with how to implement all that I had learned in my teacher preparation program. Tracie's concern about developing her practice around educational theory presented a prime opportunity to better understand how new teachers implemented the educational theory into practice. When I asked Tracie if she would be willing to let me help her implement critical pedagogy into her classroom and work as her mentor to assist her with the process, she agreed, "Obviously, this [the standard curriculum] isn't working; something needs to be done to change it." Thus, on this Saturday afternoon in late-November of 2007, Tracie and I commenced the process of implementing critical pedagogy into her curriculum in the hopes of engaging her students in the development of critical literacy. The second phase of our collaboration, which will be documented in chapter five, began in the spring semester of the school year.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to demonstrate how one novice English language arts teacher defines critical literacy and uses a pedagogy and curriculum to support this definition. I also endeavor to show how a group of 10th grade students enrolled in an AP English Language and Composition course in a high school setting both respond to and engage in critical literacy when they are challenged to experience this type of curriculum and pedagogy. This dissertation is the result of in-depth collaborative inquiry between a university instructor and a novice English teacher. The intended audience for this study includes teacher educators, in-service teachers, and researchers in the field of critical literacy and English education. Although the first three chapters of this dissertation are written in a traditional format, the subsequent chapters provide a clearer description of Tracie and her teaching philosophy and narratives of Tracie, the students, and myself.

While the majority of the chapters that follow present a narrative of the ten month experience in which I explored these concepts with Tracie, I interweave critical theory with the description in order to provide context for the study. The purpose of using narrative structure in this dissertation is to create a space for the participating teacher's and students' voice and to privilege their perspectives over that of the researcher, as is the goal of critical pedagogy. However, because the researcher determines which quotes to use and how to contextualize the story, the researcher always has the utmost privilege of voice. In order to ensure I accurately represented the perspectives of participants, I gave them access to the pieces I wrote about them, which will be discussed more in the methodology section.

Additionally, in this study, I endeavor to demonstrate how Tracie fostered critical literacy in the classroom in order to empower her students and teach them how to question

the dominant narratives that shape our society. By using the voices of participating students, I show their responses to and interaction with this type of curricula and pedagogy. In this study, I argue that by using critical literacy in a classroom of average-performing high school students, teachers can offer opportunities for students to develop voice while critiquing power relations in society that oppress and marginalize. With this study, I hope to shed light on the possible benefits of developing critical literacy with high school students and the importance of introducing critical pedagogy in teacher education programs in order to facilitate this type of literacy.

Research Questions

The original questions I sought to answer through this study were: What does critical literacy look like in an English classroom? How do novice teachers envision implementing this type of methodology into their pedagogy? How do students actually respond to critical literacy? As I began initial observations, I developed more guiding questions, which eventually shaped the rest of the study:

1. How does a first year English educator define critical literacy?

2. What does critical literacy pedagogy look like in a classroom of a first year English educator teaching in a low-performing school with a large minority population?

3. What are the methods for implementing critical literacy into an Advanced Placement curriculum with students who exhibit low-average performance on end-of-course tests?

4. What is the impact of critical literacy on low-performing students?

5. How can this study inform the field of teacher education?

6. How can this study inform the field of English teacher education?

In this dissertation, I use a variety of critical theories (critical educational theory, discourse analysis) to frame my analysis of observations, interviews, and artifacts collected over the course of the study; I will introduce these in subsequent chapters. That data collected demonstrate that how, with the assistance of a mentor, a novice teacher defines her practice and is able to implement critical pedagogy in a manner that supports the development of critical literacy skills with high school students. The data also reveal how participating students responded to critical pedagogy, and with guidance and support, were able to articulate extremely cogent and astute criticisms of social, economic, and political messages represented in texts.[3]

Ultimately, the research demonstrates how teachers can engage students in the acquisition of skills and understandings that enable them to be critically literate beyond the walls of the classroom. Decidedly, analysis of the observations, interviews, and artifacts collected through this research will better inform my own practice as a teacher educator who plans to use critical pedagogy to foster critical literacy with pre-service teachers as a model for their classroom practice. Additionally, it is an attempt to recognize how teachers can cultivate critical literacy with high school students and to reveal how that practice is developed.

Structure of Chapters

This dissertation has a traditional format, with a review of the literature on the theoretical perspectives of critical pedagogy and critical literacy in the second chapter. In chapter three, I explain the methodological approaches used in the data collection and analysis. In chapter four, I present a more detailed depiction of Tracie's background and

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[3]For the purposes of this study, "text" can include songs, novels, conversations, pictures, movies, etc.

teaching philosophy, provide a clear description of Durham, NC and Crosstown High School, and explain how our relationship developed over the course of the fall semester of 2007. In addition to providing a more thorough description and history of critical literacy, I also explain my observations during the fall semester, when the conceptualization of the formal study began. In chapter five, I describe the spring semester when Tracie and I collaboratively planned and implemented three educational units that facilitated the development of critical literacy with her students. Chapter six concludes the dissertation with a summary of the findings and implications for future research, including recommendations for the inclusion of critical theory in teacher education programs, more research in the development of critical literacy skills with diverse populations of students, and future directions for my research with novice teachers and urban students. In this chapter, I also explain the limitations of this study.

This research will inform my practice as a future teacher educator and the field of critical literacy in English classrooms. I hope that this research will provide teacher educators with a better understanding of how to demonstrate to pre-service educators the practices that facilitate the development of critical literacy. I contend there is a need for more specific instruction in this area in order for pre-service teachers to be able to bridge the gap between critical pedagogical theory and practice once immersed in the induction phase of teaching.

"Yes We Can"

At the beginning of this chapter, I use a quote from "Yes We Can," a song written in by Jamaican-American hiphop artist and producer Will.i.am. Originally inspired by a campaign speech given by then-United States senator Barack Obama, this song and related

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music video first appeared on the public share space, dipdive.com. President Barack Obama, used the English translation of the United Farm Workers slogan "Sí, se puede" (Spanish for "Yes, it can be done") in a 2008 campaign speech following the New Hampshire Primary. The slogan was originally created in 1972 by civil rights activists and co-founders of the United Farm Workers of America, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. In February 2008, using the transcript of President Barack Obama's speech, Will.i.am created a song that offers hope and paints a picture of equality for members of the multicultural society that is America. In chapter five of this dissertation, I describe a class discussion where I challenged students to identify a song that represented the message of hope for their generation. Tracie's students selected *this* song as one that paralleled the songs of hope written during the Civil Rights Movement almost 50 years ago.

I passionately believe that by participating a more critical form of pedagogy, educators have the power to shrink the gaps that divide poor and minority children from their more privileged peers. As a teacher educator, I see this research as a means by which to enable all Americans to one day be able to honestly declare, "Yes, we can" achieve equity and excellence in our schools with *all* children.

CHAPTER 2

Critical Literacy: Transforming the Word and the World

As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, American public school students are becoming more diverse, while the teaching force remains mostly white and female. With this in mind, teacher education programs are being challenged with the task of preparing teachers to enter classrooms full of students who will not have similar educational experiences or cultural backgrounds. In order for these teachers to be able to engage with and develop relationships with students from multicultural backgrounds, I argue that teacher education programs must incorporate the tenets of critical pedagogy and critical literacy development into their curriculum. In this chapter, I provide a brief historical overview of critical pedagogy and critical literacy and present a review of the literature on these two theoretical frameworks. Using the literature on these two interwoven theories, I provide a conceptual frame for this research study.

History of Critical Theory in Education

Ernest Morrell (2008) traces the foundations of critical literacy back to Plato and Socrates; however, for the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on a more modern conceptualization that draws on the philosophy of the Frankfort School, which developed in Frankfurt, Germany in 1929 (Bohman, 2005). James Bohman (2005), professor of Philosophy of Social Science, writes that the concept of most "critical theory" was developed by a group of German neo-Marxist social theorists who concentrated on dismantling social

injustice and inequality and maintained that unequal power relationships are endemic. According to the viewpoint of the Frankfurt School, "critical" theory is distinct from "traditional" theory in that "it seeks human emancipation" (Bohman, 2005, para. 1). Several schools of critical thought have developed from this concept of social transformation that seeks freedom for all people. The Frankfurt School of critical thought has influenced modern critical theory especially in critiques of institutions like schooling, which legitimize and perpetuate the status quo (Bohman, 2005). In the next section, I will explain critical pedagogy and its relation to critical literacy.

Critical Pedagogy

The research of critical social theorists, Paulo Freire (1970), Henry Giroux (1985), and Peter McLaren (1998) is concerned with dismantling oppressive hegemonic[4] relationships produced by traditional forms of schooling. These theorists critique the traditional models of education, which typically place the teacher at the front of the classroom possessing and transmitting the knowledge to students who sit idly learning or receiving the information (Freire, 1970).

Paulo Freire

Brazilian literacy educator Paulo Freire (1970) first wrote of the possible benefits of a critical educational orientation in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire believed that by teaching oppressed groups to critique the dominant ideology, "false consciousness" (p. 130) could be minimized and groups might begin to resist oppressive rule systems. Freire (1970) engaged in a pedagogical orientation that taught oppressed people how to dialogue

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[4]Peter McLaren (1998) explains that hegemony "refers to the maintenance of domination not by sheer exercise of force, but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family…Hegemony is the struggle in which the powerful win the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their own oppression" (p. 173-175).

about how they were subject to the societal rules and expectations of the dominant social classes. Through his work with adults in the peasant-class in Brazil in the 1960s, Freire encouraged the people to question structures like education and use their voices to gain freedom from oppressive structures. I use the work of Paulo Freire to frame my discussion of how literacy educators can use critical pedagogy to facilitate the development of critical literacy.

Freire (1970) asserts that a traditional model of schooling privileges the "banking concept of education" (p. 72), which operates on the assumption that people need to be devoid of whatever ideology they bring to school, and then filled with the information or beliefs of the teachers. This model of education is characterized by instruction that "turns [students] into 'containers,' into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher" (p. 72). Furthermore, in these classrooms, "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 72), and the teachers dichotomize themselves as being the possessors of knowledge. In this role, teachers do not challenge the students to think critically, but yet, assert that the teachers' knowledge is that which must be privileged. Instead of this model, Freire (1970) promotes a system in which students achieve *conscientizacao*—or "critical consciousness" (p. 36), which is a state of awareness that is reached by "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 36). Freire suggests that *conscientizacao* involves critiquing social, political, and economic injustices through a process of both reading texts and engaging in discourse that challenges those injustices. Freire also argues that this awareness cannot be achieved if students are not given the opportunity to explore and construct knowledge, thus resulting in social action that

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combines the theory and practice. Critical pedagogy opposes the image of the teacher who assumes a didactic role at the front of the classroom.

Contrary to the traditional banking model of education, critical pedagogy challenges learners to develop into critical thinkers who can act as change agents. Freire (1970) proposes that students must be exposed to experiences that offer them opportunities to actively construct knowledge. Freire warns, "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (p. 73). Thus, schools must be sites where students can interrogate social conditions through dialogue about issues significant to their lives. By engaging in critical pedagogy, educators reduce the possibility that "oppressors" continue to prevent students from being able to "critically consider reality" (p. 74). Freire argues that the dialogical nature of critical pedagogy takes the teacher out of the role of instructor and engages students in conversations that challenge this banking model of education. Freire contends, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (p. 72). This dialogical model of education creates a space where teachers are learners and learners are teachers, thus providing a context for everyone to construct and challenge theories of knowledge. According to Freire (1970):

> The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of* freedom not *against* it" (p. 80).

Critical pedagogues, as described by Freire, engage students in problem solving, reflection, and experiences that demonstrate that "the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation" (p. 86).

Although Freire was one of the first to write on the subject of critical pedagogy, modern critical educational theorists, like Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren pose similar views of this critical orientation and make it more applicable to American schooling. These social theorists maintain that the definition of critical pedagogy is never static, and is thereby intended to raise critical consciousness so that students can recognize and transform ever-changing oppressive social conditions (Giroux, 1985; McLaren, 1998; Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

Henry Giroux

Henry Giroux (1985) supports Freire's position on critical pedagogy and suggests that critical educators must

> develop a discourse that can be used to interrogate schools as ideological and material embodiments of a complex web of relations of culture and power, on the one hand, and as socially constructed sites of contestation actively involved in the production of lived experiences on the other. (p. 23)

Furthermore, schools must be revealed as spaces that perpetuate the ideologies of the dominant culture and reproduce the social hierarchy.

Like Freire, Giroux (1985) warns against a pedagogy that controls and manages students and suggests that these practices promote "hegemonic classroom practices" (p. 26) and "devalue the cultural capital [students] possess" (p. 27). In Giroux's view, critical pedagogy develops around "critically affirmative language" and "allows educators as transformative intellectuals to understand how subjectivities are produced within those social forms in which people move but which are often only partially understood" (p. 35). Giroux

views power as an active process in which all members of society participate on some level, and he challenges both teachers and students to engage in three fields of discourse— production, text analysis, and lived cultures in order to "empower teachers and students around emancipatory issues" (p. 36).

In his later work, Giroux (1993) suggests that we read the world differently based on our own circumstances of class, race, gender, and politics. Typically, groups who represent the status quo (i.e. White, middle-class, male, heterosexual) dominate the discourse of schooling, and those who are excluded within this discourse are labeled as "other" (p. 367). Giroux maintains that it is imperative that critical educators must speak to significant "social, political, and cultural issues from a deep sense of politics of their own location" and focuses on the importance of showing students how to "unlearn the habits of institutional (as well as forms of racial-, gender-, and class-specific) privilege that buttress their own power while sometimes preventing others from becoming questioning subjects" (p. 369). Critical educators have to keep in mind that although they may not necessarily be able to speak for the "other," they may speak "self-reflectively" about "issues of racism and sexism as ethical, political, and public issues which implicate in their web of social relations all those who inhabit public life, through from different spheres of privilege and subordination" (Giroux, 1993, p. 369).

Giroux suggests that "educational institutions" are not neutral sites and that "they are deeply implicated in forms of inclusion and exclusion that produce particular moral truths and values…and specific notions of citizenship" (p. 373). Giroux recommends that teachers, engaged in any form of critical pedagogy must show students how to "critically assess dominant and subordinate traditions so as to engage [students'] strengths and weaknesses"

(p. 374). Instead of viewing history as "a closed, singular narrative" (p. 374) to be "revered and memorized" (p. 374), students participate in the reconstruction of history by telling the stories of those people whose voices are not represented in the curriculum.

In order for students to better "understand otherness" (p. 370), Giroux suggests a need to "challenge and redefine the substance and effects of cultural borders" (p. 370) and that critical pedagogues create occasions for students to be "border crossers in order to understand otherness on its own terms" (p. 370). Giroux also recommends that teachers construct "borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power" (p. 370). Teaching students to be "border crossers" (p. 375) means that they will learn to move between "diverse cultural zones" that give them opportunities to examine the relationships between "dominant and subordinate groups are organized, how they are implicated and often structured in dominance, and how such relations might be transformed in order to promote a democratic and just society" (p. 375). These opportunities offer a context for analyzing how race, class and gender intersect within power relations.

Moreover, Giroux suggests that literacy only becomes "critical" when it problematizes the structures and practices of representation and when people realize that meaning is never fixed. Giroux suggests that in order to be literate "is to undertake a dialogue with others who speak from differed histories, location, and experiences" (p. 367-68).

Peter McLaren

Peter McLaren (1998) relates critical pedagogy to literacy training by suggesting that the acquisition of a critical literacy enables both teachers and students to "analyze and

challenge the oppressive characteristics of the larger society" (p. 214) in order that a more "just, equitable, and democratic society" (p. 214) can be produced. McLaren envisions an education system that is re-structured to teach children to reflect how they are raced, classed, and gendered through participation societal institutions. By focusing on curricula and pedagogy that challenges students to critique their participation in society, teachers can assist in the development of critical literacy.

Critical Literacy

Critical pedagogy and critical literacy are inextricably linked in that critical pedagogy must be used to support critical literacy development. A curriculum that supports critical literacy was first nationally mandated in Australian public schools in the mid-1980s (Luke, 2000) and gained popularity in the United States in the early to mid-1990s. According to Allan Luke (2000), although there are various definitions and conceptualizations for critical literacy, the Australian notion of critical literacy is grounded in the Freirian model of critical pedagogy. Luke explains that literacy education in Australia has focused on "building access to literate practices and discourse resources, about setting the enabling pedagogic conditions for students to use their existing and new discourse resources for exchange in the social fields where texts and discourses matter" (p. 449). Critical literacy then, is about acquiring the skills to examine "textual relationships of power" (p. 449).

Decades of research on textual analysis, infusion of media and popular culture into curriculum, and study of the importance of developing multiple discourses all inform the Australian vision of critical literacy (Luke, 2000). In the classroom that fosters critical literacy development, students and teachers strive to "(a) see how the worlds of texts work to construct their worlds, their cultures, and their identities in powerful, and often overly

ideological ways; and (b) use texts as social tools in ways that allow for a reconstruction of these same worlds" (Luke, 2000, p. 453). Essentially, teachers in this system concentrate on demonstrating how texts position people in the world and engaging students in the re-positioning of themselves to examine and alter the "social fields in which they live and work" (p. 453).

Historically, the American notion of critical literacy has been focused on "aspects of higher order comprehension" and "metacognitive reading strategies" (Luke, 2000, p. 450), which include making inferences about texts, determining author's purpose, and other reader-response related issues in text. Prior to the popularization of the critical literacy movement in Australia, the American concept of critical literacy was more focused on actual literary analysis; however, a paradigm shift within this field occurred in the late 1990s, thus aligning the American definition of critical literacy with the concepts upon which Australian literacy educators focused.

American rhetoric and composition professor Ira Shor also aligns with a Freirian concept of critical literacy. Shor (1999) defines critical literacy as "language use that questions the social construction of the self" (p. 1). Shor suggests that by challenging power relations and discourses, people engage in a pedagogy that will allow them to transform traditional models of education. Similar to the goals of critical literacy in the Australian model, Shor maintains that people need to "examine our own development, to reveal the subjective position from which we make sense of the world" (pp. 1-2). Furthermore, Shor suggests that critical literacy provides the tools that enable students to critique the injustices and inequalities in society.

Using Critical Pedagogy to Facilitate Critical Literacy Development

Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1985) explore the idea of using critical pedagogy to foster the development of critical literacy. They write that critical literacy could clarify the relationship between "knowledge and power" (p. 132). Aronowitz and Giroux maintain that knowledge is a "social construction" associated with norms and values, and that sometimes, "knowledge serves very specific economic, political and social interests" (p. 132). These social critical theorists suggest that critical literacy has the potential to provide a "theoretical tool" (p. 132) to assist learners in the development of a critical relationship with their own knowledge.

By engaging students in the examination and reform of social situations and exposing them to the biases and hidden agendas within texts, educators can demonstrate how to "read" in a reflective manner (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). "Read" in this connotation means to give meaning to messages of all kinds, instead of just looking at the words on a page and comprehending the meaning of those words.

Australian teacher educator Glenda McGregor (2000) proposes that before a teacher can implement critical literacy, the teacher must recognize that reading is "a social practice in which texts are sites of struggle for ideology and discourse" (p. 221). First, the teacher must be cognizant of biases that exist in texts and be willing to challenge the viewpoints put forth by the authors. McGregor also suggests that by creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable asking critical questions, educators can create a new structure for schooling.

Once students participate in the development of a classroom community, they can begin to challenge the accepted methods of knowledge construction. McGregor (2000)

explains that teachers who engage in critical pedagogy teach students "to question and refute the given order of things," and "to dispute normalizing practices that define their identities and implicitly allot them a position on the grid of power relations within particular sites and ultimately within their own society" (p. 222). Furthermore, by showing students how to question and re-position themselves in the power relations of society, teachers encourage the "development of a meta-language for analyzing textual codes" (p. 223), which enables them to become "critically literate" (p. 223). Essentially, McGregor argues that educators can use a critical pedagogy to engage students in questioning social ideology, inequality, and oppressive relationships promoted by texts. Using this form of critical pedagogy promotes the development of critical literacy.

Characteristics of Pedagogy and Curricula that Fosters Critical Literacy

In the following section I describe several components of critical literacy instruction as presented by both theorists and practitioners in the field.

Critical literacy and discourses

In order to better understand the need for critical literacy, one must be familiar with the concept of Discourses. James Gee (1990) defines Discourses as "socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'" (p. 3). In his later work, Gee (1996) expands his definition to suggest:

> Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize. (p. 127)

Furthermore, Gee maintains that people engage in Discourses as ways of "displaying (through words, actions, values, and beliefs) membership in a particular social group or social network," (p. 128) and that people use Discourses to create their social identities. Always imbedded in social institutions, Discourses create 'social positions' from which people participate in communication using their own style and inventiveness. Thus, Gee contends that because Discourses are part of our identity, humans use them as tools to display to others who and what they are in any particular moment.

In relation to education, Gee (1996) suggests that people learn a primary Discourse, which is a framework developed early in life based on socio-cultural interactions with family. Using this primary Discourse, people acquire or resist secondary Discourses to help them navigate other social situations. Secondary Discourses are important to schooling because they are:

> those to which people are apprenticed as part of their socializations within various local, state, and national groups and institutions outside early home and peer-group socialization – for example, churches, gangs, schools, offices. They constitute the recognizability and meaningfulness of our 'public' acts. (p. 137)

Thus, secondary Discourses are acquired through social interaction in places such as classrooms, where the Discourses that students already have acquired assist them in mastering other Discourses. According to Gee, "the classroom must juxtapose different Discourses for comparison and contrast" (p. 138).

Furthermore Gee (1996) asserts that Discourses relate to critical literacy in that literacy is essentially "mastery" of a secondary Discourse, which occurs through "enculturation into social practices through scaffolding and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse" (p. 139). Thus, in order for students to master a secondary Discourse, they must have access to opportunities to learn in natural, meaningful

ways that place them at the center of knowledge construction. This method of acquiring

knowledge through experiences resembles the Freirian model of critical pedagogy in that

differs from the oppressive method of traditional banking education models which focus on

the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student.

Gee (1990) recommends that for both acquisition and learning to take place, teachers

must offer students opportunities to participate in educational experiences that connect with

the social practices they encounter outside of the classroom.   Because literacy is mastered

through acquisition, and not learning, teachers can better facilitate the mastery of literacy by

creating situations where students can both learn and acquire knowledge, which is also the

goal of critical pedagogy. Gee contends that schools should be spaces where acquisition and

learning take place and where "non-mainstream" children will be supported in the mastery of

dominant secondary Discourses" (p. 10). Critical literacy maintains a position at the

intersection of acquisition and learning primary and secondary Discourses.

Critical literacy and multicultural education

A discussion of critical literacy would not be complete without the mention of

multicultural education. Lisa Delpit (1992) agrees with much of what Gee wrote about

Discourses and literacies and describes his work as "an 'identity kit,' that is, ways of 'saying-

writing-doing-being-valuing-believing,'" (p. 297). Using the framework of Discourses (Gee,

1990), Delpit (1992) suggests that students of color often reject literacy (the traditional

definition) because they feel that Discourses "reject" them (p. 299). Students of color often

fail to participate and invest in education because the material and pedagogical practices do

not take their culture and interests into account. The educational goal in the classroom that

promotes critical literacy development is for teachers to "empower and politicize"

disenfranchised students. (Delpit, 1992, p. 300). In order to emphasize the critical aspect of literacy, some teachers reject curriculum that emphasizes grammar, formula writing, and standardized curriculum, instead opting for materials and pedagogy that engages students in the study of issues related to their social positioning in mainstream society and emphasis on their cultural backgrounds.

In the area of multicultural education and critical literacy development, Ernest Morrell (2008) contends that when the ideologies of the power holders is validated in these institutions, the "most disadvantaged populations" are pushed to the margins because they often do not contribute to the process of authentication of new knowledge (p. 3). In an educational setting, ethnic and language minority students are pushed to the margins because their educational experiences do not address or emphasize their cultural backgrounds. Teachers who use critical pedagogy can create opportunities for critical literacy development with the inclusion of multicultural curricula.

Critical literacy and social activism

There is most often an activist component to critical literacy education, where the teacher serves as the facilitator of social change. Joe Kretovics' (1985) suggests that in addition to teaching students functional skills, the teacher must also provide "conceptual tools necessary to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices" (p. 51).

Similarly, Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987) recommend an approach to literacy that seeks to reach beyond the text in order for learners develop a relationship between the word and the world. Freire and Macedo promote a concept of literacy where

learning to name the world through experiences can facilitate the "transformation" of society (p. 2).

Furthermore, Lisa Delpit (1992) suggests that with the activist potential in critical literacy education, students will learn how to envision the world in the way that all people have access and opportunity. When students learn use the tools of critical literacy, they can expose, discuss, and attempt to solve social injustices within their own lives.

An example of how classroom teachers use social activism as a pedagogical tool to foster critical literacy can be found in the practice of Norma Greco, a high school English teacher who engages students in community service projects. Building on the theory of critical literacy as conceptualized by Freire (1970) and Giroux and McLaren (1986), Greco (1992) has developed a curriculum that uses "community service projects which structure opportunities for students to engage in literacy struggles in the real world" (p. 83).

Greco engages mostly White suburban middle-class students in her senior English class in a tutorial project with young low-achieving readers in an inner-city school. Because the community service project in itself does not fall under the category of critical pedagogy, Greco encourages her students to maintain reflective journals during this experience. Students develop critical literacy while "interacting with others in their community," which helps remove "social barriers" and encourages participation in the larger community (p. 83).

Greco frames her students' development of social consciousness and reflective voice through the lens of Paulo Freire's concept of "critical posture" (Freire, 1970, p. 48). Greco explains that many of her students who come from "economically secure backgrounds" admitted that their preconceptions of inner-city populations were "dispelled" by the experiences provided by the project (p. 84). Through analysis of her students' journal

entries, Greco also realizes that early frustrations with the reading abilities of the inner-city students disappeared and were replaced by "socially aware" criticisms of "larger issues of the socialization of children and the politics of education in our society" (p. 85). Greco explains that her program can be replicated in other English classrooms where teachers want to offer students opportunities to "read and write their world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 56).

Opportunities like the ones Greco offers to her students can be reproduced in any subject area and across grade levels in order to introduce groups of students to a perspective to which they may not normally have access. This type of service project, when used concordantly with a reflective writing piece can offer students opportunities to evaluate systems of power that influence their own experience and perceptions of "other" (Giroux, 1993).

Critical literacy and writing instruction

Wendy Morgan (1997) explains that writing is less often the focus of the critical literacy classroom than reading. Morgan hypothesizes that since critical literacy became a popular educational topic at the same time process writing (drafting, conferencing, revising, and publishing), the latter became the preferred method for teaching writing skills. The "back to basics" writing movement that focuses on the five paragraph essay is more skill-driven than analytical and critical. Morgan suggests that writing instructors in a class that develops critical literacy must engage students in "the constituting of the writing subject through schooled and societal discourses and practices" (p. 62).

In a discussion of her own practice in her secondary English classrooms, Morgan explains how she challenged students to write an autobiography that not only told their stories, but also constructed "a chain of causes and consequences," presenting stories of how

they acted and reacted "in particular ways in situations" (p. 63). Morgan writes, "If students can explore through their writing the discourses through which they and others become selves, this may provide possibilities for changing the subject in and of literacy" (p. 78).

What Morgan's work means for the development of a writing curriculum that facilitates the development of critical literacy is that students must not only write autobiographies, but they must also be given the opportunity to analyze how cultural and social standards are present in the construction of the included memories. Morgan asserts that teachers can model how students can evaluate their own construction of self through the analysis of multiple autobiographies and also can talk about how people construct their self-identities based on how culture and society socializes them. By leading students in examination of texts written by people of multiple backgrounds, students may be able to grasp how those experiences shape their identity.

Ira Shor (1999) proposes that "specifying the political forces in any rhetorical setting" (p. 18) is a crucial feature of critical literacy, which distinguishes it from other writing-to-learn programs and rhetorical methods. According to Shor, critical writing classes challenge students to identify and recommend "social and personal alternatives to the status quo" (p. 16). In composition programs that maintain a focus on critical literacy, students carve out spaces for examining self and identity in addition to composing pieces that resist the dominant power structure. Arguing against the view that writing is simply a system of communication through the use of specific words, Shor maintains that there may need to be a resistive characteristic in critical writing.

Critical literacy and critical media literacy

Learning to examine messages produced by mainstream media is another characteristic of developing critical literacy with students. Embedded in the Freirian tradition of *conscientization*, critical media literacy enables members of society, in this case public school students, to engage with media and create counter-hegemonic representations that are typically "othered" (Giroux, 1993) by the manner of supplementary instruction in which they are presented. Students must not only learn how to deconstruct media, but according to Donna Alvermann and Margaret Hagood (2000), they must also be able to create their own forms of media that are representational of their experiences. In their review of the literature on critical media literacy, Alvermann and Hagood define critical media literacy as

> the ability to reflect on the pleasures derived from mass media and popular culture practices (e.g. radio, TV, video, movies, CDs, the Internet, gang graffiti, and cyberpunk culture); the ability to choose selectively among popular culture icons; or the ability to produce one's own media texts. (p. 194)

Within the field of cultural studies, Alvermann and Hagood suggest that using a pedagogy that includes development of critical analysis of media can show students "how society and politics are structured and work to one's advantage or disadvantage" and "how issues of ideology, bodies, power and gender produce various artifacts" (p. 194). Alvermann and Hagood also propose that one must first "understand the historical and social conditions in which the text was constituted" in order to better understand audience consumption of a specific "cultural text" (p. 194). The authors argue that audiences "actively produce meanings that then become part of the historical and social conditions in which future cultural texts are constituted" (p. 194). In essence, when one is literate in the area of media

studies, one has developed the ability to read and contextualize messages, while analyzing them for power relations.

American cultural studies theorists Doug Kellner and Jeff Share (2005) define literacy as "gaining competencies involved in effectively learning and using socially constructed forms of communication and representation" (p.1). Moreover, Keller and Share contend that "literacies evolve and shift in response to social and cultural change and the interests of elites who control hegemonic institutions" (p.1). Thus, they argue that multicultural education must teach students how to be able to recognize the dominant messages presented by the ubiquitous media. Educators must not only teach media literacy, but also demonstrate how to see and sympathize with the "inequities and injustices of a society based on gender, race, and class inequalities and discrimination" (p. 2). Kellner and Share recommend that by producing alternative forms of media, students can develop a "healthy multiculturalism of diversity and more robust democracy" (p. 2). Otherwise, the media includes and excludes certain groups, thus benefiting the "dominant and positively represented groups," while marginalizing and subordinating others (p. 3).

Kellner and Share (2005) also argue that people are, on the whole, unaware of the socialization that they receive through media messages because "its pedagogy is frequently invisible and subliminal;" thus, there is increasing need to make people aware of "how media construct meanings, influence and educate audiences, and impose their messages and values" (p. 5). In order to encourage intelligent media use, critical educators must demonstrate how "to discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, and to investigate media effects and uses" (p. 5).

Within the field of education, Kellner and Share (2005) propose a "media literacy movement…[that] attempts to teach students to read, analyze, and decode media texts, in a fashion parallel to the advancement of print literacy" (p. 5). They suggest that this type of curriculum is "important both for groups of marginalized from mainstream education to learn about their own heritage and for dominant groups to explore the experiences and voices of minority and oppressed groups" (p. 6). In the English classroom, critical media literacy can "promote multicultural literacy" and be used to "help invigorate democratic debate and participation" (p. 6). Kellner and Share warn that teachers must guide students in a "democratic" way in order to show they value students' personal opinions and views on the media with which they engage and collaborate with students "in the process of unveiling myths and challenging hegemony"[5] (p. 7).

Production of media texts

Morrell (2008) argues that "true emancipatory education" can not exist without people interpreting, deconstructing, producing, and distributing "language and texts that name and ultimately destabilize existing norms and power relations in the cause of promoting change" (p. 208). Morrell also maintains that students must not only "acquire the critical language to deconstruct media narratives," but they must also develop as "agents of change" and learn to create media as well (p. 158).

Morrell (2008) explains that in the summer and after-school literacy programs in which he works with urban high school students, he encourages "new media production in the form of web pages, weblogs, newsletters, and film documentaries" (p. 217-218) in addition to critical essay writing, sharing poetry, and playwriting. Furthermore, Morrell

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[5]Hegemony is defined as "the maintenance of domination not by sheer exercise of force, but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family" (McLaren, 1998, pp. 173.)

suggests that in addition to "creating spaces for meaningful production of texts," critical

educators must also "locate and generate sites of exchange and distribution of these texts

including online journals, literary magazines, film festivals, and conferences" (p. 220).

Since its creation, YouTube[6] has become new pedagogical tool, co-opted by students

and teachers alike for quick publishing of student-generated media productions. In fact,

several scholars in the field of teacher education have explained its uses in well-respected

peer reviewed journals. Jim Trier (2007a), a professor of cultural studies and secondary

English methods at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill argues that "vidcasting

holds great potential for involving both teachers and students in a variety of cool media

engagements" (p. 408-09). In his article on the up and coming new web packages that offer

immediate online publishing gratification, Trier describes YouTube as one of the fastest

growing web resources that allows users to upload, view, and share videos.

Trier (2007b), uses Youtube in his teaching pedagogy and discusses the "pedagogical

potential" of the web resource for classroom teachers (p. 599). In addition to explaining how

simple it is to search the website for video clips using a key word or the username of the

uploader, Trier discusses the possible benefits of using YouTube in the public school

classroom. In his own secondary English methods course, Trier shows pre-service teachers

how they can "introduce a new author to students by showing selected videos of authors who

are either reading their work or being interviewed" (p. 601). Trier emphasizes that teachers

might be able to find these same clips on DVDs, but this vidcasting site requires far less time

and money to compile such resources. Trier also recommends that teachers engage students

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[6]According to Wikipedia, a free publicly authored online encyclopedia, YouTube is described as "a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips." Although unregistered users have the ability to watch videos, those who register can upload their videos based on appropriateness of content.

in the creation of their own videos and upload them as a "culminating 'publishing' activity of a movie-making process" (p. 602).

Justification for Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy

The development of critical literacy is intended to raise learners' critical consciousness about oppressive social conditions. Critical pedagogy that fosters the development of critical literacy encourages students to question societal conceptions of institutions like family, poverty, education, equity, equality, etc., not only to critique the structures that serve as 'norms,' but also to demonstrate how these 'norms' are not experienced by all members of that society.

In this section I have presented a theoretical framework for how I conceptualize critical pedagogy and critical literacy, which I view as interconnected. In chapters four and five, I use this framework to examine how Tracie engages in critical pedagogy to develop critical literacy with her AP English students.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study was conducted from September 2007 through June of 2008 using qualitative research methods in an attempt to demonstrate how one first year educator defines and develops critical literacy with her AP English Language students. Throughout the span of one academic year, I was a participant observer[7] in Tracie's English language arts classroom, where I observed her and twenty-three of her students during their daily routine. During this time, I collected artifacts in the form of student work, maintained field notes for each observation, and formally and informally interviewed Tracie and her students.

During the first semester of the 2007 school year, my role as Tracie's informal teaching mentor allowed me to gain access to the site and cultivate a relationship with both Tracie and her students, which I will document in chapter three. The original goal of the study was to observe Tracie's teaching practice in the spring semester in order to determine how she defined and implemented a pedagogy that supported critical literacy development. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, which will be further detailed in chapter five, Tracie and I collaboratively planned and engaged students in three units entitled: Composition: Writing Portfolios and the AP Exam, Literature Circles, and When the Levees Broke. The change in the initial focus of this dissertation took the research down another path, and the study became two-fold. First, I wanted to demonstrate how Tracie defined critical literacy and how her students responded to a pedagogy that supported this definition,

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[7]After IRB approval from Office of Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

and secondly, I decided that it would be necessary to examine the relationship between Tracie and myself for implications for the field of teacher education. Thus, the following chapters not only present a narrative of the relationship that developed between Tracie and myself, but also incorporate an analysis of how her students responded to the lessons we planned and implemented together.

The aim of this research is to develop a rich description of this particular classroom environment and to examine Tracie's implementation of curriculum and pedagogy that supports critical literacy development. In order to do this, I evaluate students' responses and writing samples from these three units in order to develop a holistic picture of the possible benefits of facilitating critical literacy with urban students. I engaged in document analysis of the unit plans, assignments, and student work using a framework of the most common teaching methods that foster critical literacy (Behrman, 2006), I contrast Tracie's definition of critical literacy with that of other English language arts teachers and theorists in the field of critical educational theory.

In order to better position my study among the literature already published on the use of critical literacy in the high school English classroom, I searched the term "critical literacy" within *The English Journal*, which is a periodical that publishes articles written both by practitioners and researchers. I selected 1987 as the initial date for the search because this was the year Paulo Freire and Donald Macedo published their seminal text, *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*, which serves as a partial theoretical framework for my literature review on critical literacy theory. Also in this year, Ira Shor wrote, *Freire for the Classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching,* which is a collection of essays by teachers who have used Freire's concepts of critical pedagogy in their own classrooms.

The term "critical literacy" first appeared in *The English Journal* in the February 1989 call for manuscripts. In the section, "Freedom of Expression," (1989) the theory of Paulo Freire is emphasized: "students often feel alienated in the school, especially in courses designed to promote literacy" (p. 7).[8] Following this initial call for articles that described how teachers used critical literacy in their classrooms, 30 articles on critical literacy were published in the journal over the next twenty years. Although eight of the articles are written by English teacher educators about their personal teaching practice or the practice of a teacher they observed, none of the articles mention a collaborative relationship between the university instructor (mentor/instructor) and the research participant. In the remaining articles classroom teachers describe their use of methods to facilitate critical literacy or scholars review books about critical literacy.

In hopes of finding other studies similar to mine, I conducted another search of the term "critical literacy" in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, but found only one article that documented a university instructor's implementation of lessons in an eighth grade language arts class. Spector and Jones (2007) explain how Karen Spector taught a unit on Anne Frank and the Holocaust with the goal of facilitating the development of critical literacy with a group of students. Although Spector, an English teacher educator at the University of Alabama, planned and implemented this lesson, she does not detail any ongoing collaborative relationship with the actual classroom teacher.

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[8]This call for papers asks contributors to consider: "How can the literacy curriculum be designed to generate critical thought and interactive learning among such students? How can English teachers combat the tendency of schools to reward passivity and socialize students as uncritical consumers of information provided by others? Does the discipline of English as it is presently constituted, meet the needs of children of the working poor and welfare families? How can Freire's concepts of 'dialogic teaching' and 'critical literacy' be adapted to modern American high schools?" (p. 7).

A search of the key words "critical literacy" in articles in the ERIC database produced 139 articles that focused on the development of critical literacy or book reviews that dealt with the topic; however, none of these articles documented a collaboration between a university instructor and a first year teacher implementing critical literacy. I also searched through several books on critical literacy that were written by university professors. Though several academics write about their own research of teachers who implement curriculum and develop a critical pedagogy to promote critical literacy with urban youth (Mahiri, 2004; Morrell, 2008), I did not find texts that describe an instance where a university instructor works with a former student to develop a pedagogy to facilitate critical literacy praxis.

This critical case study is unique in that it presents the story of a collaboration of a university instructor and a novice teacher engaged in critical pedagogy with the end goal of empowering critically literate youth.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers, seek to "understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometime to transform or change social conditions" (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). For almost nine months, I immersed myself in this particular classroom environment interacting with participants and observing their behaviors, exchanges, and reactions to a type of teaching that is intended to "raise critical consciousness" (Freire, 1970). Qualitative researchers collect data in the natural setting of the participants in order to tell their stories as accurately as possible (Glesne, 2006); therefore, the aim of this research was to develop a rich description of this particular classroom setting and to study the experiences of the teacher and a select group of students in greater detail.

Glesne (2006) writes that qualitative researchers endeavor to better understand how participants construct their social worlds and produce their ontological truths. "Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions" (p. 4). I chose to engage in qualitative research methods because I wanted to better understand how educators, after completing teacher preparation program, implement a pedagogy that supports critical education theory. I also wanted to learn more about how students reacted to a pedagogy that engaged them in analysis of social, political, and economic messages that are implied in texts, as is the goal of critical literacy.

Critical multicultural educator Gloria Ladson-Billings contends in *The Dreamkeepers* (1994), that American public school children are becoming more diverse, thus causing a growing need for teachers to use engaging curriculum that takes into account all backgrounds and cultures. Using a blend of critical theoretical and methodological perspectives, I analyze the pedagogy and curriculum used by Tracie to determine whether if, over time, her students became more engaged in the classroom setting and felt empowered to speak about political, economic and social issues. Through the data collection and analysis of this dissertation, I hoped to determine whether critical pedagogy might be one of the methods for encouraging the academic success of a diverse group of students, particularly in this high school setting.

The key theoretical perspectives used in the collection and interpretation of data come from the field of critical ethnography as explained by Kincheloe and McLaren (2005). The methodological analysis that is central to my data collection and analysis include a blend of narrative analysis as conceptualized by Clandenin and Connelly (1990) and discourse

analysis by James Gee (1999). The theoretical conceptualizations that underlie this study are taken from the work of Paulo Freire (critical pedagogy), Henry Giroux (critical literacy), Peter McLaren (critical pedagogy), Lisa Delpit (multicultural education), Gloria Ladson-Billings (culturally-relevant pedagogy), Donna Alvermann & Margaret Hagood and Doug Kellner & Jeff Share (critical media literacy), and James Gee (developing primary and secondary discourses for critical literacy); these are discussed in chapter two, which is the review of literature. These critical orientations and theories inform the choice of critical ethnographic methods.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Case Study

Although the case study in the field of social science research is a nebulous entity, it usually involves long-term, in-depth research of one person or case. Thus, because my involvement with the participants and site in this study continued over ten months, it can be considered a case study of one class. Additionally, I employed various research methods that align with the expectations of the ethnographic case study, which include data collection techniques such as interviewing, participant-observation, and artifact collection. Based on the data collected, I provide a narrative of the experience in chapters four and five, which privilege the language of the both the participants and myself as a participant researcher.

Critical Ethnography

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) explain that critical ethnography is a more "self-conscious" reflective form of ethnography, in which researchers, "regard their work as a first step toward forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself" (p. 305). Thus, prior to beginning the formal

research study, I evaluated my positionality and began my research "with [my] assumptions on the table" (p. 305) in order to better recognize how my own awareness and subjectivity were present in "the contradictions of the world of appearances accepted by the dominant culture as natural and inviolable" (p. 306). As an educator who uses critical pedagogy and multicultural education methods, I come to this study with a transparent commitment towards this type of teaching. I closely examine how my background and experience as a teacher led me to this work at the end of this dissertation (APPENDIX I).

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) also contend that because most mainstream approaches to research unintentionally reproduce "systems of class, race, and gender oppression" (p. 304), the critical ethnographer must be careful to study the interconnectedness of all disciplines, which is a blurring of the lines between genres of research. More importantly, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) warn that critical ethnographers must be mindful of their role in the research because they investigate "tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant" (p. 284). This study examines the relationship between a first year English teacher and a veteran English teacher who is now a university instructor. During the research study, it was essential that I constantly evaluated my role in the research setting—at some points, I had to navigate the multiple functions I served in Tracie's life.

In the beginning of the ten month study, I acted as an academic researcher in Tracie's classroom; however, as time progressed, Tracie viewed me in several roles: former instructor, teaching mentor, friend, and colleague. At most points in the development of this relationship with Tracie, I realized that I was in the dominant power role. In order to resist

that hierarchical structure, I often reminded Tracie that the recommendations I made for the improvement of her practice were only suggestions, and as the professional in her classroom, she knew what was best for her particular students. Furthermore, I made a conscious effort to transform the original relationship dynamics where Tracie viewed me as her instructor into a more guiding or advising role. Although she still saw me as someone who had the pedagogical and content knowledge of a veteran English teacher, by February of 2008, almost six months after the observations began, she explained that no longer viewed me as the person for whom she was "performing" as a student.

The shift of power roles was noticeable when Tracie and I began to teach collaboratively; regardless of our plans, she had the final approval for all classroom activities. By evaluating my role in the development of power relations that characterized the research setting, I was able to show Tracie that she could trust that I would be her supportive advisor during the experience. Tracie soon felt empowered to question my suggestions and often explained to me why my ideas would not work with her students. The development of this collaboration cultivated a feeling of mutual respect.

In order to examine the changing nature of our relationship, I maintained an oral journal where I evaluated my own personal biases and judgments after each classroom observation. When talking through my daily experiences, I found that I was able to scrutinize my opinions on Tracie's decisions and recall how it felt to be a new teacher struggling to make the right decisions. Similarly, Tracie maintained a journal and blog about our experience, and she documented how she felt about my presence in her classroom and her opinions of our collaborative planning sessions. Tracie and I shared these reflections with each other on a weekly basis so that we could talk about how we came to similar or

different conclusions about the implementation of curriculum and pedagogy. As I wrote and revised this dissertation, I shared all chapters with Tracie so that she could have access to and offer her own critique of the information and analyses I present.

In the critical ethnography paradigm, the researcher must encourage the participants to investigate social problems, which becomes an educational process that may result in social action. By encouraging Tracie to consider how she could implement curriculum that would challenge her students to analyze the social, political, and economic messages in texts, I compelled her to engage her students in a social action project at the end of the school year. In the fifth chapter of this dissertation, I explain how Tracie, the students, and I examined Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke* (2006)*,* which documents the events leading to and following the massive destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In chapter five, I explain how Tracie and I encouraged students to take social action within their community, which aligns with the methodological goals of critical ethnography.

Narrative Analysis

Using narrative analysis, I contextualize and historicize the experiences of the participants. Utilizing narrative analysis, mutual voices of both the participants and the researcher construct the story of the experience. Since educational research often has a collaborative nature, Clandinin & Connelly (1990) stress that the researcher must explain how the relationship with the practitioner develops and how the researcher gains entry into such a sensitive setting as the classroom. Thus, throughout this dissertation, I not only explain how the relationship between Tracie and myself initially developed, but I also describe how this relationship continued to transform into a collaborative partnership. Clandinin & Connelly (1990) explain that when using methods of narrative inquiry, it is

imperative that the practitioner "is given the time and space to tell her or his story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long had" (p. 4). Consequently, both Tracie's and her students' voices can be heard more fervently as the dissertation progresses. As our collaboration developed, she was more empowered to provide insight into the research, and the students became the focus of the study and the classroom.

Within narrative inquiry, the data collection is a primary means by which to construct the stories of the participants and the researcher. In order to develop a rich, detailed description of both the setting and the participants, the researcher must collect multiple forms of data. Based on the data collected over the course of the study, my narrative transformed multiple times. Although I initially sought to examine how Tracie identified and defined critical literacy, I used theory and an analytical framework (Behrman, 2006) to determine whether her definition aligned with the most common practices involved with the development of critical literacy. Although many themes emerged over the course of the research study, this narrative focuses mostly on these topics of identifying and defining critical literacy as they were most important to the teacher and the researcher.

Narrative inquiry requires researchers to evaluate the role they play in the research setting and the reciprocity of the relationship with participants. Along the participant-observation continuum as outlined by Glesne (2006), I was "*participant as observer*" (p. 50) in this study, which allowed me the opportunity to learn more than an outsider may typically learn. However, this status also challenged me to maintain perspective as an objective researcher.[9] Glesne warns, "The more you function as a member of the everyday world of the researched, the more you risk losing the eye of the uninvolved outsider; yet, the more you participate, the greater your opportunity to learn" (p. 52). As I became more involved with

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[9]This will be discussed in the validity and ethical challenges section of this chapter.

the execution of the daily lessons and class activities, the mutuality of the relationship

allowed the teacher and students to view me as a member of their classroom, as someone

who was there to assist and not study them. Bi-weekly discussions with my advisor and

occasional conversations with members of my dissertation committee enabled me to maintain

an external perspective about the observations and my participation in the classroom.

Questions posed by these committee members compelled me to keep in mind my role as

researcher and to note my own biases and personal relationship with the research setting and

participants.

Narrative inquiry does not rely on grand narratives, nor does it focus on absolute

truths. Instead this heuristic form of research allows the researcher to develop the stories of

participants in situational contexts. Thus, I do not suggest that the research presented here

can be applied to any other setting. On the contrary, this study is particular to one teacher

working with one group of students in one particular school setting—the narrative is theirs

alone (through my representation), but may provide insight into how researchers and

practitioners can replicate the outcomes in other classrooms.

Discourse Analysis

In order to contextualize student writing assignments and examine the situated

meanings of given statements within the larger class discussions focused on issues of power,

I used discourse analysis (Gee, 1999). James Gee (1999) maintains that a discourse analysis

"is based on the details of speech or writing that are arguably deemed relevant in the situation

and that are relevant to the arguments the analyst is attempting to make" (p. 88). Situational

meanings within the field of discourse analysis are "negotiated between people in and

through communicative social interaction" (p. 80) and are constructed "on the spot" (p. 80) as people communicate in a given context based on past experiences.

When reviewing observation notes and student assignments, I analyzed the words the students and teacher wrote and spoke based on the context of the situation. Throughout chapters four and five, I am careful to explain how each piece of data presented is contextualized both in terms of the identity of the person who produced it, and in the grander scheme in which it was produced in the classroom. By explaining how the data was collected and under what circumstances, I hoped to situate the data within the experience of the particular class.

Research Setting and Participants

A detailed description of the setting in which the study was conducted is essential for a better understanding of why it is important to conduct research in the areas of critical literacy and classroom practices. In this section, I give a brief overview of the location of the school and its demographics; however, because of several themes that emerged during the coding and analysis of data, the setting and participants will be described in much greater detail in the chapters four and five of this dissertation.

In order to develop a clearer understanding of how a first-year teacher defines and uses critical pedagogy to facilitate the development of critical literacy, I observed one instructor's teaching practice with a class of twenty-three tenth grade students at Crosstown High School, a medium-sized high school in the Durham, NC.

Located in the Piedmont section midway between the Smokey Mountains and the Atlantic coast, Durham, NC is part of the Research Triangle Park, which is the largest site of

scientific research in the nation.[10] Author Jean Anderson (1991), provides a detailed modern history of Durham, NC, which she describes as a racially discordant city plagued by institutionalized racial discrimination and legal segregation. Anderson reports that because of the segregated nature of Durham, the African American middle class developed strong social networks and built their own banks, library, hospital, insurance company and churches. Consequently, the Ku Klux Klan gained strength in order to protect the financial holdings of the White citizens, and a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was created to counter the agenda of this group. As a result of the development of these two groups, an environment of racial tension and local discrimination lawsuits flourished.

Anderson (1991) explains that during the initial years of the Civil Rights Era in Durham, Black citizens participated in sit-ins and economic boycotts, and by the end of 1963, restaurants, movie theaters, swimming pools, public libraries, and even the city council in Durham were integrated. Despite racial tension, Black citizens in Durham were successful in integrating businesses within the city and gained status as business owners and respected leaders.

Although the Black community attempted to revitalize the areas within Durham which stood neglected after much of the White inhabitants had moved to the county, the city council approved construction of the Durham Freeway directly through a prosperous historically Black neighborhood called Hayti. Thus, in 1965, in a process termed "urban renewal," the unity of the Black community within Durham, NC was destroyed and race relations suffered drastically (Anderson, 1991).   Since the division of the Hayti neighborhood in Durham, Black citizens have worked to re-organize and develop a strong

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[10]The Research Triangle Park. (2007). http://www.rtp.org

community reminiscent of the past; however, the surrounding area has fallen into disrepair and the population has been stricken by unemployment and homelessness.

As explained above, Durham, NC historically has been a contested space where racial conflict and segregation are commonplace. Although Blacks in this city experienced prosperity prior to segregation, integration had a lasting effect on race relations, and the Black population lost much of their wealth and property during the time of urban renewal. Thus, the city is now highly segregated, with the majority of Black citizens living in the center of town and the White population residing in the surrounding county.

Over last forty years, Durham has experienced great change in both industry and population demographics. According to the 2005 Durham Population Profile (2008),[11] there are approximately 223,000 people living in Durham County. Of those living within the county, approximately 50 percent categorize themselves as White; 40 percent identify as Black; eight percent identify as Hispanic or Latino; four percent classify as "some other race;" three percent are Asian; and the remaining residents categorized themselves as Native American or Pacific Islander. The same demographic information cited above categorizes residents within the city of Durham as 46 percent White, 44 percent Black or African American, nine percent Latino or Hispanic, four percent Asian, and a nominal Native American and multi-race population.[12]

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[11]Population Profile Durham County and the City of Durham.
http://www.pdfdownload.org/pdf2html/pdf2html.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.durhamnc.gov%2Fdepartments%2Fplanning%2Fpdf%2Fdemographics.pdf&images=yes

[12]This information does not include students enrolled at either Duke University or North Carolina Central University.

In the 21ˢᵗ Century, the atmosphere of the city has not changed drastically, and segregation is still common among neighborhoods and schools. In the next section, I describe the demographics of the Durham Public School system.

Durham Public Schools

According to the website maintained by the Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau (2008), Durham Public Schools is the seventh largest school district in the state with 31,000 students and 4,500 employees. The county has five traditional high schools, and the overall student population is 53.9 percent Black, 22.6 percent White, and 17.1 percent Hispanic. Census records indicate that 32 percent of households in the city include residents under 18-years-old. As of 2006, approximately 90 percent of high school students were enrolled in public school, which means that ten percent (+/- 5.5% margin of error) of high schoolers attended private school or were not enrolled in any school. An analysis of the school attendance and the population data suggests that most students attending private schools in this city are White, which reflects growing national trends in areas surrounding urban school districts.

Crosstown High School

It is necessary at this point to describe the student body and geographic location of Crosstown High School within the town of Durham, NC. Located in the southeast quadrant of Durham County, NC between two major highways, Crosstown draws the student population both from the surrounding neighborhoods and from a vein into the middle of the urban landscape (Figures I and II). These adolescents face similar life experiences as their peers in larger metropolitan areas throughout the United States. Crosstown is a state

identified low-performing high school[13] with a strong athletic and band program. According

to the school's website, it has a traditional curriculum and operates on a block schedule,

which means there are four-one hour and thirty minute classes each day. The mission of the

school is, "to provide a safe educational environment that will empower and encourage

students to realize their highest potential while preparing them to become life-long learners

and contributing members of a global society."[14]

Attempting to meet the goals of the mission statement, Crosstown High School boasts

a multitude of academic- and interest-related clubs and organizations and has 20 athletic

teams. The athletic department has created a webpage separate from and far superior to the

school's webpage, and viewers can access sporting event schedules, join the booster club,

and purchase sports-themed merchandise.

Crosstown's Media Center website allows students to search the library catalogue and

online educational databases like NC WiseOwl and Proquest. Students can also find links to

several helpful resources for online research, as well as academic and social calendars.

Students and parents can access information about scholarships, college admissions

requirements, and testing schedules through the Guidance homepage.

During the 2007-08 school year, Crosstown High School had 94 teachers, which

include 19 career and technical teachers and 24 exceptional children instructors. Each of the

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[13]According to the North Carolina Public Schools ABCs Accountability Model, Crosstown has been identified
as a low-performing school because it did not meet the expected growth standard and had a performance
composite of less than 50 percent. As a low-performing school, Crosstown is eligible to receive help from the
NCDPI's District and School Transformation Division. This information was obtained from the North Carolina
Department of Public Instruction web resource on testing and accountability.
http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/index.jsp?pYear=2007-2008. Retrieved, December 18, 2008.
[14]Crosstown High School homepage.

science, math, social studies, and English departments has between 9-11 teachers (2008).[15] Of these instructors, only 74 percent are fully licensed teachers, which is below the district and state average. Ninety-four percent of classes are taught by state identified "Highly Qualified Teachers," which refers to the 29 teachers on staff who hold advanced degrees and five teachers who are Nationally Board Certified. Forty-four percent of teachers at Crosstown have been teaching for 10 or more years, while 39 percent of teachers have only been teaching between 0-3 years. The remaining staff has been teaching between 4-10 years, which aligns with the state averages. Crosstown has a high teacher turnover rate of 28 percent, which although being common in urban schools, contributes to a lack of stability within the faculty.

According to testing data for the 2007-08 academic year, Crosstown High School was identified as a "Low Performing School," which means that less than 50% of students are below grade level based on state-mandated academic proficiency tests. The school report card for the 2007-08 school year reveals that students in grades 9-12 at Crosstown, scored significantly lower than district and state averages on all state mandated End-of-Course tests. In fact, the data reveals that students at Crosstown scored as low as five (physical science End-of-Course test) and thirty-one percent (Algebra I and Algebra II) lower on every test, and within those margins, there is an even greater disparity between ethnicities, revealing an achievement gap. Crosstown's four-year cohort graduation rate is 58.8 percent, and there is only a 49 percent participation rate in the SAT[16] as compared to a district average of 68 percent and a state average of 63 percent.

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[15]Information about teaching credentials and testing data was obtained from NC Report Card web resource. http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?Page=4&pSchCode=368&pLEACode=320&pYear=2006-2007

[16]The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) is the most common predictor of students who plan to attend college.

Based on the testing data from the 2007-08 school year, Crosstown has been designated a Priority School by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which, according to the National Education Association (NEA, 2008), means that because of underlying issues of financial disparity, there is a need for more resources to "transform them into academically challenging and stimulating learning environments." The NEA recommends a need to train teachers and support staff to use "classroom-tested research and strategies," and provides outreach to affiliates and school districts, state legislators, community members, and the general public in order to transform these schools.

In the 2007-08 school year, the school had an estimated enrollment of around 1250 students. According to the NC School's Report Card (2008), during this school year, approximately 76 percent of Crosstown High School's student population self-identified as African American, while the other 24 percent of students were almost equally classified as Hispanic and Caucasian. According to the school report card, Crosstown had an estimated four crimes per 100 students in the 2007-08 school year, which is three times the district and state averages. Furthermore, the administration reported that there were 35 short-term suspensions, two long-term suspensions, and zero expulsions. On average, 93 percent of students attended school on a daily basis during the 2007-08 school year. Crosstown High School scored below state and local levels in almost every category on the state's report card, which on paper looks negative, and in reality is detrimental to the success of both students and teachers who walk through the building each day. Crosstown is a school in need of highly qualified teachers and support for new teachers and their students.

Participants

Over the course of one academic year, I worked with Tracie, a twenty-three-year-old, first-year teacher who self-identifies as Black. Tracie earned her undergraduate and Master of Arts in Teaching degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A more detailed description of Tracie's background appears in the next chapter. Although I observed her class in the fall semester of 2007, the formal study did not begin until the second semester of the academic school year. From January 2008 through June 2008, I observed and interacted with twenty-three students in an English language arts class and use their individual stories to develop a picture of the student experience in a classroom that uses critical pedagogy to foster critical literacy. The study participants were tenth grade students enrolled in an AP English language course at Crosstown High School.

Of the twenty-three students who participated in this study, there were nineteen females and four males, ranging from 14-17-years-old. Fifteen females self-identified as Black, and four females identified themselves as White. Of the male participants, one identified as Asian, one as White, and two self-identified as Black. Within Crosstown High School, all students were healthy volunteers enrolled in a magnet academy that would prepare them to enter future careers in the medical field.

Prior to the formal observation, interviewing, and artifact collection, all research participants and the parents of minors were asked to sign consent forms that explain the purposes, procedures, and risks of project (APPENDIX II). All participants and their parents gave permission for participation in the study.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I gained access to the site based on my relationship with Tracie, and slowly cultivated relationships with students during the fall semester of the school year. I did not formally interview all twenty-three students; instead, I

relied on the natural setting of the classroom to provide opportunities to talk with students both individually and in groups. During these informal conversations, I talked to the students about their course assignments, their experiences with education, and eventually, prepared and facilitated class discussions that addressed issues of race, class, gender, and other sensitive topics associated with the development of critical literacy.

Data collection

Data collection for this study officially began in January 2008 and concluded in June 2008. I employed the most popular ethnographic data collection methods, which David Silverman (1993) explains are observation, textual analysis, interviews, and recording and transcribing. I also collected student work and lesson plans, which Clandinin (1986) explains is a strong source for narrative inquiry. While conducting this research study, I combined all of those methods to develop a clear understanding of my research participants and setting.

Classroom Observations

Silverman (1993) writes that in qualitative research, the observational method is an essential component of understanding another culture. The aim of collecting observational data is "to gather first-hand information about social processes in a 'naturally occurring' context" (p.11). Because Tracie and her students encouraged my participation in their classroom while I was engaged in observation prior to the beginning of the study, I established a sense of trust and developed a relationship with the participants before I officially began collecting data. This is the ideal situation in qualitative research projects. From September through December 2007, I spent approximately 20 days observing in Tracie's classroom in order to help her with her instructional planning and implementation. The events that occurred during these visits are documented in more detail in chapter four.

After this initial observation period, I traveled to Tracie's class at least twice a week from January to June 2008. During these six months, I arrived during her planning period, which came immediately before the class in which I participated, stayed the entire class period, which included a lunch break in the middle, and left following the bell. I generally spent two and a half hours with Tracie and her students. Some weeks, I was in the classroom four times, and while others I was able to observe every day for two-week stretches. This habitual attendance provided me the opportunity to become somewhat of a co-instructor with Tracie on the days in which she invited me to take part in the lessons. Furthermore, it allowed the students the opportunity to get to know me better and not be too affected by my presence when I was simply observing. This six month period is explained in chapter five.

During my observations I attempted to become a part of the classroom structure, but I also had to remember my role as a researcher. It was my intent, over the course of one semester, to use my observations to inform my understanding of how and to what degree students and teacher interacted within the space of the classroom.

Glesne (2006) contends that, as humans, our curiosity causes us to observe our surroundings on a daily basis; however, when engaging in qualitative research, the observer must constantly examine observations for meaning and personal bias. I studied all aspects of the classroom setting: the participants, conversations, reactions, specific events, patterns, items produced from curriculum, classroom setup, and behaviors, all while analyzing for "evidence of personal bias" (Glesne, 2006, p. 52).

During my visits, I observed in a broad sweep, noting everything, but nothing in particular and searched for paradoxes that indicated possible problems or issues confronting the participants. Due to my role as an established part of the classroom environment, I was

privy to conversations between students and between students and the teacher, which is not always the case in the research setting.

In the field of qualitative research, it is extremely important to record all observations in the form of field notes. During this study, I maintained a journal or log in the form of a small, spiral-bound notebook, which was helpful later in constructing a descriptive narrative of the experience. While making notes during observations, I was as descriptive as possible and supplemented with more description after the class period ended as I left the site. The notes were in full field note format (Glesne, 2006) in order to provide for accuracy at the time of analysis. The notes were descriptive, and I created sketches so that I could later visualize the setting.

As mentioned earlier, I reflected on the events in the form of an audio recording after each observation. I recorded my feelings, analyzed the lessons and students' responses, and reflected on my participation. I also commented on the teacher's behavior and interactions with students and the students' reactions and interactions with each other and the instructor. At the time of data analysis, all of these sources were used to better understand how Tracie operates within the framework of critical literacy.

Interviews

In qualitative research methodology, interviews are generally interactions between two or more people where the researcher asks specific questions to better understand the perspectives of the respondents. Glesne (2006) explains that often, researchers use interviews to investigate the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes about a specific issue, which is a form of topical interview. By interviewing study participants, the researcher can better understand events or themes discovered in the observation process. In this dissertation, I use

the theoretical framework provided by critical educational theorists to interpret the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Although I observed Tracie and her students in the established classroom setting, I also conducted interviews with the teacher and selected students based on the activities taking place in the classroom. Thus, observations and interviews were the primary data sources of this study. Without interviewing participants, I had no way of knowing what they were thinking while creating a certain artifact or taking part in the class dynamics. Because this study has such a small sample, it was possible to conduct interviews with selected students, transcribe the text, and analyze the data in a timely and efficient manner. After transcribing audio-recorded interview data into a word processing program, I coded the data by hand for themes relevant to critical pedagogy and critical literacy. As I read through the observation and interview transcripts, I searched for broad themes and then narrowed those themes according to my theoretical framework.

The content of the teacher interviews focused mainly on Tracie's experience both as a student and first-year teacher, her definition of critical literacy, and concerns with lesson planning and implementation. All teacher interviews took place either in the classroom or in another location selected by the participating teacher. Tracie participated in three formal interviews over the course of the second semester. Although some interview questions were open-ended, the primary source of information came from conversations about Tracie's concerns, questions, and personal interests related to her practice.

All student participants were not interviewed for this study. Glesne (2006) suggests that interviews can be conducted in order to check the validity of the responses to questionnaires. Although I did not use questionnaires to investigate participants, I collected

data in the form of artifacts, which had a similar outcome. Once students turned in artifacts or commented about their experience in the classroom, I interviewed them either in person or via email if after the formal observation period of the study concluded. The student interviews followed a traditional format, and students were asked to describe how the lessons of the teacher influenced their participation and investment in the course this year. These interviews took place in the hall outside Tracie's classroom.

On some occasions, I felt it was necessary to ask questions about students' personal background in order to try to develop a clearer understanding of the assignments they submitted for the study. In these cases, the student and I communicated through email. I gained a better understanding of why students responded to certain topics based on the personal information they provided through these informal interviews.

Textual Analysis

In addition to using observations and interviews, qualitative researchers often rely on documents and text to construct an image of participants in a study. Not only do researchers use documents they discover, they often request that participants create documents in order to measure certain issues and topics being studied. Glesne (2006) maintains that in addition to providing historical and contextual background for the observations and interviews, "[documents] enrich what you see and hear by supporting, expanding, and challenging your portrayals and perceptions" (p. 68).

Over the course of this study, I collected documents relevant to my research, such as lesson and unit plans created by the teacher and essays, projects, and assignments produced by the students. In addition to these artifacts, I also analyzed electronic communication between the teacher, the students (with permission), and myself.

Data Analysis

According to many researchers in the sociological domain, data analysis occurs as a process to organize, manage, and make sense of the data in order to create explanations in the form of theory (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Silverman, 1993; Glesne, 2006). Over the course of my research, I used the thematic analysis, which is "a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (Glesne, 2006, p.147).

While collecting data early in this research project, I continuously transcribed my data, entered it into the Microsoft Word data processing program, and then created analytic files in order to organize the data according to themes. By maintaining separate files of data for specific themes that emerged, I was able to organize my own thoughts while working through the interpretation process.

After collecting the data for this study, I began the process of analytic coding, which involves sorting and defining information into an organizational framework. John Seidel and Udo Kelle (1995) maintain that "[c]odes represent the decisive link between the original 'raw data,' that is, the textual material such as interview transcripts or fieldnotes, on the one hand and the researcher's theoretical concepts on the other" (p. 52). While reading the data, I developed major codes that identify a concept or main idea. Because I already have the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy to guide my data analysis, I have attempted to use only a few broad codes by which to organize the data.

Within the coding process, I maintained a code book that demonstrates major codes and subcodes that emerged as I collected and analyzed the information. I read the data in order to develop the major categories and themes that emerged from interviews,

observations, and artifact analysis. First, In my analysis of the research setting, more specifically, Tracie's classroom, three analytic themes emerged: classroom community, multicultural education, and culturally-relevant pedagogy. Then, I developed a framework to better understand the intersections of these analytic themes. Next, because I was most interested in understanding Tracie's methods for facilitating the development of critical literacy, I analyzed themes and patterns in relation to the descriptions of the most commonly used teaching methods for developing critical literacy, which include: reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, producing counter-texts, reading from a resistant perspective, conducting research based on student choice (Behrman, 2006), and participating in social action (Kretovics, 1985). The presence of these features in Tracie's lesson and unit plans will be discussed in greater detail in chapters four and five.

While I engaged in informal analysis throughout the data collection process of this qualitative inquiry, the formal analysis began in the summer after the data collection phase concluded. During this formal examination, I arranged the categories and themes that emerged from the field notes, interviews, and artifacts collected from the spring semester. Not only did I take into account the research conducted at Crosstown High School, but I also used the work of other scholars who have conducted research in the area of developing critical literacy with urban students (Carlson, 1993; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2002; Mahiri, 2004; Morrell, 2008) to inform my analysis and make recommendations for using critical pedagogy in urban schools.

Once I coded for themes and separated the data accordingly, I used James Gee's (1999) work in discourse analysis to examine transcripts from interviews with Tracie and

student work. By engaging in a close reading of small blocks of text, I attempted to examine

responses so that I could connect them to the discourse on critical literacy.

<div align="center">**Positionality**</div>

In the traditional format of the dissertation, the researcher generally mentions

positionality in this section. However, I provide my positionality at the end of this

dissertation (APPENDIX I) and have chosen to format the dissertation in this way because,

although I feel that my experiences and positionality that bring me to this work are extremely

important, I want to privilege Tracie's experience and demonstrate how her use of critical

pedagogy is the result of her own educational experiences and cultural background.

In order to depict the dynamic between the Tracie and myself, I draw on the work of

Patricia Hill Collins (1998), who argues that, although women of color and white women

generally share space in academia, there is a hierarchical structure that prevents group

solidarity. Thus, the social institutions, in this case public school and the University, in

which they operate as well as the relationship between the women, must be evaluated for

inequality. At points throughout this dissertation, I evaluate the relationship that formed

between Tracie and myself in multiple roles and settings—teacher educator/student;

mentor/first-year teacher; university representative/graduate of the university; collaborative

teaching colleagues; and friends.

According to Collins (1998), "Standpoint theory argues that ideas matter in systems

of power" (p. 381) and a standpoint is the place from which each person views the world and

selects the issues that mean the most to us or have been hidden from us. Essentially, Collins

argues that those who have less power can provide a more impartial view than those who

hold the power. Furthermore, Collins suggests an approach that uses inquiry and research

grounded in the standpoints of women and other marginalized groups is more objective and more complete than research based on the perspectives of those who are privileged by a mainstream status. I use Collins' work as my framework for evaluating the power dynamics between Tracie and myself throughout the narrative portion of this dissertation.

Additionally, Collins' work is important in my portrayal of Tracie, who is a Black female concerned with social activism and the improvement of curriculum and pedagogy for her students. Collins maintains that in order for Black women to break their silence about institutional oppression and marginalization, they must find their voices in the public arena.

Moreover, Collins has classified the historical functions of Black women in research as either being "objects" or "agents" of sociological knowledge. Although I conducted my study within the walls of Tracie's classroom, I found it extremely important to emphasize her knowledge about the needs of her students and her experiences. The goal of this dissertation is to privilege the participants' voices and to provide a space where their knowledge is valued in the field of educational research.

Ethical Issues

Goodall (2000) provides several questions for consideration when entering into ethnographic research (APPENDIX III). I used these questions when reflecting upon my role in the research so that I would maintain space and not colonize or impinge upon the setting or participants. While participating in both the informal and formal data collection and observation phases of this research, I paid particular attention to the Goodhall's (2000) questions to ensure that I did not colonize or speak for the participants in this study. I often evaluated my own answers to these questions in order to maintain an ethical relationship with participants.

Furthermore, in the writing of this narrative within the dissertation study, it was essential that I ensure that, as an academic and university researcher, I do not subjugate the participants in my study by imposing my theory onto them. One major goal of this study is to use the words and actions of the participating teacher, Tracie, to define critical literacy and explain why and how she thinks she is using this type of critical pedagogy. Moreover, the students will tell their own stories about their experiences with critical pedagogy. I intended for their knowledge to be legitimized and validated through this work.

Validity

As is the case with any research study that involves human participants, the data is only as valid or trustworthy as the honesty with which participants respond. Thus, it was my goal to continuously participate in various methods of ensuring the validity of this study to the best of my ability. In order to account for validity of the investigation, I relied on multiple methods or triangulation of data, which, as Berg (1995) suggests, is an "attempt to relate [the data] so as to counteract the threats to validity involved in each" (p. 5). I collected interview data, survey data, teacher lesson plans, and artifacts representing student work. Furthermore, as Glesne (2006) suggests, triangulation improves validity through, "use of multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources, multiple investigators, and/or multiple theoretical perspectives" (p. 37). This dissertation not only reports the varied standpoints of participants through multiple forms of evidence, but also relies on several theoretical perspectives.

Once I completed the initial drafts of the analysis chapters, I requested that Tracie read the chapters to give me feedback on whether I had accurately represented her and interpreted the classroom interactions. Additionally, I sent sections of chapters where I

analyzed student writing samples to participants to ask for their feedback on my analysis, which is called member-checking or triangulation (Glesne, 2006). Students not only read the pieces in which I examined their thoughts, but they were also given the opportunity to clarify any information that was unclear. By performing this member check, I made certain that I was portraying the participants as truthfully as possible in order to privilege their voices (Glesne, 2006). Although I emailed both Tracie and her students portions of this text that represented them, I cannot fully ensure that they read each piece completely; however, none of the participants asked me to make changes about what I wrote. Regardless of the amount of feedback I solicited from the participants, I chose which pieces to include and analyzed the data, which is represented by my voice, overall.

Additionally, in order to increase the trustworthiness of my research, I participated in seven of the eight verification procedures that Glesne (2006) reports are most commonly found in qualitative research. 1.) I spent extended time in the research location as a participant observer in order to "develop trust [and] learn the culture" (Glesne, 2006: p. 37). 2.) I triangulated the data as described above. 3.) Upon reflecting on my field notes, I debriefed and conducted a peer review with a colleague in order to get an unbiased opinion on my personal observations. 4.) As I transcribed the data to my computer, I continued to reflect on my subjectivity and monitored my biases throughout the study. 5.) During and after each interview, I shared interview transcripts and my personal notes with participants to ensure that I have accurately represented their thoughts. 6.) While writing, I maintained detailed description of the location, events, and context in which the research was conducted. 7.) Finally, I solicited assistance from my committee to scrutinize my research process and verify that I conducted the study in a valid manner. Of course there is no way to ensure that

any study is completely valid; however, evaluating the researcher's subjectivity is another method of improving the trustworthiness of the study.

Limitations

Another limitation to this study will actually be a benefit for future projects. Because of the sheer amount of data collected in this research study, I am unable to include all artifacts and interview data in this dissertation. Additionally, there were several themes that emerged over the course of the data analysis that will not be discussed in this dissertation. My original research goals were to learn more about critical pedagogy and critical literacy; I also address other emergent themes, like mentoring, culturally-responsive/relevant teaching, and multicultural education.

Despite these limitations, I hope that this critical case study informs the literature on possible benefits of developing critical literacy and providing university support to new teachers in their induction phase.

CHAPTER 4

Becoming a High School English Teacher: Culture Shock

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I provided review of the literature on critical pedagogy and critical literacy; in this section, I outline an analytic framework that demonstrates the most common methods of implementing critical pedagogy in order to foster the development of critical literacy in high school English classrooms.   Additionally, because several themes emerged during the coding and analysis of the data presented in this chapter, I provide a brief overview of these themes in order to provide the reader with a context for my analysis. Following the analytic framework of critical literacy and explanation of the emergent themes, I use observation notes, teacher-generated lesson and unit plans, and transcripts from formal interviews, to describe Tracie's background and teaching philosophy. I also explain how the development of our relationship in the fall semester of 2007 created the opportunity for this research project.

Critical Literacy in Practice

Although American public schools have yet to adopt explicit classroom practices for developing critical literacy, several characteristics of lessons that foster critical literacy have been identified by researchers in the field. A few months before Tracie called me to inquire if I would be interested in observing and mentoring her, I found an article in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* about the most common practices used by teachers in their attempts to engage students in the development of critical literacy. Edward Behrman (2006), a teacher educator at National University, conducted a review of articles written by teachers

describing their efforts to develop critical literacy with their students. Operating on the

premise that critical literacy can be developed through pedagogical practices that promote

social justice and engage students in the exploration of language and literature, Behrman

examined the specific pedagogical practices teachers implemented in classrooms that

facilitate the development of critical literacy. In his review of the literature, Behrman

acknowledges that strategies for critical literacy development look different in every

classroom based on the subject matter and the population of students; thus, he posits there is

no formula for how teachers facilitate critical literacy. However, in his search of articles

containing the term 'critical literacy,' Behrman found 36 instances that presented "lessons or

units intended to support critical literacy at the upper primary or secondary levels (grades 4-

12)" (p. 491).

Behrman's (2006) search revealed that the most commonly used practices in the

development of critical literacy include: reading supplementary texts;[17] reading multiple

texts;[18] reading from a resistant perspective;[19] producing counter-texts;[20] having students

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[17]Offers students the opportunity to confront social issues that are often avoided by canonical works and/or are not covered in dated textbooks. Access to supplementary texts like "works of fiction, nonfiction, film or popular culture," (p. 492) challenges students to critique themes and issues similar to those found in traditional texts and encourages conversations about social issues that may not be covered in the typical required reading curriculum of schools. Teachers commonly reported using young adult novels and lyrics from popular music as supplementary texts in order to engage students in discussion about race, gender, religion, politics in a more contemporary manner than canonical works.

[18]Teachers often incorporate multiple texts based on similar literary themes in order to engage students in a critique of the "subjectivity of authorship" (p. 492). By providing the stories of people whose voices typically aren't heard, teachers offer students the opportunity to participate in dialogue about why certain perspectives are normally privileged, while others are silenced. Behrman explains the use of multiple texts also "encourages students to understand authorship as a situated activity" (p. 493).

[19] By using texts that present the perspective of resistance, teachers challenge students to interpret a text from the viewpoint of the world and not just the common Euro-centric ideology often found in standard texts. Behrman explains that when teachers engage students in an examination of how people from different backgrounds (i.e., racial, cultural, gender, religious, socio-economic status, sexual orientation) would read the same text, they can gain a better understanding of how the representative group would be affected by a reading of a text, which enables students to confront certain stereotypes promoted by a text and deconstruct the meaning or value being privileged.

conduct research about topics of personal interest;[21] and challenging students to take social action.[22] After reading Behrman's article, I decided that it would give me a starting point for better understanding how specific activities and practices are implemented to foster the development of critical literacy.

In the narrative section of this chapter, I explain how, during a meeting with Tracie, I was reminded of Behrman's framework for practices that foster the development of critical literacy. Although I had originally hoped to find critical characteristics in Tracie's pedagogy, I was surprised to learn that she planned to engage in each of the above listed common practices associated with the development of critical literacy.

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[20]Students generate narratives or other texts, including multi-media creations, from a non-mainstream perspective. Behrman explains, "Producing counter-texts can serve to validate the thoughts, observations, and feelings of students and other underrepresented groups" (p. 494).

[21]Behrman (2006) also explains that research projects based on student choice are also a popular practice of classrooms that facilitate critical literacy. The justification for engaging students in research of topics of personal interest is that when teachers legitimize students' interests, "the students gain more control over their own learning" (p. 495). These research projects can be an effective way to involve, encourage, and empower students to take an active role in the construction of knowledge. Simply choosing a topic for research is not considered critical, however, unless students evaluate the problems within society and how the conditions of society created this problem.

[22]Behrman (2006) reports that there is most often an activist component to critical literacy education, where the teacher serves as the facilitator of social change. By participating in social action projects, students can realize how their research relates to life beyond the walls of their classroom, thus becoming part of the larger community. When students learn use the tools of critical literacy, they can expose, discuss, and attempt to solve social injustices within their own lives.

Emergent Themes

While coding interview transcripts for relationships between Tracie's practice and critical pedagogy and critical literacy theory, I noticed that several related themes emerged. As Tracie described her own educational experience and explained her teaching philosophy, I began to see that she was referencing educational theory that related to culturally-relevant teaching[23] (Ladson-Billings, 1994), culturally-responsive teaching[24] (Gay, 2000) and multi-cultural education[25] (Delpit, 1995). Although these concepts are not directly tied to the

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[23]National statistics reveal that the population of the United States is becoming more ethnically diverse, but the teaching force remains mostly white, mostly female (NCES, 2006). Teachers must learn to understand that many of their students will come to their classrooms with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds that are different from their own. When faced with the heterogeneous mixture of students in their classrooms, teachers must be prepared to teach *all* students. Culturally-relevant teaching is a term created by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) to describe "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 17-18). Participating in culturally-relevant teaching essentially means that teachers create a bridge between students' home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements. This transformative teaching methodology utilizes the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of the students to inform the teacher's lessons and methodology. Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that in the culturally-relevant teaching model, teachers believe that all children can be successful if provided the tools and support to do so. These teachers also believe in creating bonds with students and developing a "community of learners," which means that all students worked collaboratively to become responsible for each others' learning (pp. 64-65). Ladson-Billings maintains that in order for teachers to use culturally-relevant pedagogy successfully, they must also show respect for students and "understand the need for the students to operate in the dual worlds of their home community and the white community" (p. 65).

[24]Geneva Gay (2000) stresses that culturally-responsive pedagogy is imperative because it uses, "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective… It teaches to and through strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming" (p. 29).

[25]Teachers in multi-cultural classrooms must also take into account the manner in which they communicate with their students. Because the majority of teachers in the United States are White females from middle-class backgrounds, these teachers often have a difficult time negotiating power roles in classrooms with students from Black and working-class backgrounds. This discrepancy between experiences of students and teachers frequently leads to communication issues and confrontations that can be avoided if teachers spent more time in the communities in which their students live. By learning more about how their students communicate within their communities and families, these teachers can reduce the communication difficulties. For example, White teachers often offer alternatives instead of directives, which is the style of authority in many Black and working-class families. Lisa Delpit (1995) suggests that Black and working-class teachers who have spent substantial amounts of time in the communities in which their students live or grew up in similar cultures are able to engage in "culturally influenced oral interactions" (p. 33), which even progressive White teachers may not be able to replicate.

literature on critical pedagogy and critical literacy, I argue that by engaging in the practices associated with these ideas, teachers are more focused on issues of social justice and are more likely to create a classroom environment that fosters the development of critical literacy. The central tenets of culturally-responsive/relevant teaching and a commitment to multi-cultural education are both foundations of Tracie's teaching philosophy. Additionally, because Tracie is invested in the community in which her students live and shares a similar background with the majority of her students, she values the importance of using a critical pedagogy to foster critical literacy within the walls of her classroom.

In this next section of the chapter, I describe Tracie's background and educational experiences, as well as create a narrative of the fall semester of 2007, in which Tracie and I commenced our mentor/protégé relationship. I use interview and email transcripts and observation field notes to construct this narrative and engage in discourse analysis (Gee, 1999) to analyze Tracie's works in relation within the theoretical framework of critical literacy.

Tracie

At the time of this study, Tracie was a twenty-three-year-old petite Black female who was born and raised in a small, rural town in eastern North Carolina.   One of the first members of her family to attend college, Tracie graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the spring of 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English. After completing her undergraduate studies, Tracie continued her path to teaching by enrolling in the Masters of Arts in Teaching Program at UNC just one month following her graduation. Soon after accepting her first position as a teacher at Crosstown High School, Tracie and I began working together in a mentor/protégé capacity. As mentioned in chapter

one, Tracie truly wanted to be an effective teacher who could engage *all* of her students. In the section that follows, I trace the events in Tracie's life that led her to decision to become an English educator and use her words to explain her teaching philosophy.

Educational Experience

While sitting in a window sill in the main hall of Crosstown High School early one morning in the spring of 2008, I asked Tracie to tell me more about her background and why she decided to teach. Tracie begins by providing a more detailed account of her high school experience:

> Let's see, I grew up in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, which is in Nash County and it's kind of rural. Rocky Mount is kind of like a city, but the high school I went to was in the country area of the county. My high school was pretty mixed, so I had friends of different racial backgrounds.

Tracie describes the occasions that influenced her desire to become a teacher: "I found out I wanted to be a teacher in 12th grade because I was a teacher's assistant during my senior year, and I got to help out my US history teacher teach her class, do grades, and do lesson plans." The influence of a strong teacher who had been a North Carolina Teaching Fellow "opened the door" for Tracie to learn more about the scholarship and the opportunity to apply for funding to attend college.

Because Tracie was a "good student," she was asked to tutor other students who were struggling academically. Tracie admits that her grades were always pretty good, but that she never learned to study because she found high school very easy. More than anything, Tracie loved her English courses and often relished the idea of creating elaborate projects when reading a novel. She maintains that she disliked group work and often opted to do projects by herself:

Um, I think that because I grew up as an only child, I always liked individual work, I was never a group-work fan. It didn't mean that I wouldn't do it, it just meant that I learned a lot better individually. So, when, you know, when given an assignment that made me think on my own, I always gravitated to those more so than getting up in front of the class and acting something out or getting into groups to do group project or something. Um, a lot of times. I remember one in particular my senior year, it was an extra credit project, but I chose to do a huge display on Emily Dickinson. And I did it at home, like one of the best projects I've ever done. I just did it because I was interested in Emily Dickinson that year, because it was just like, hey. But my teacher put it on display, it was a big deal at that time.

In the fall of her senior year, Tracie applied for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship, which provides partial funding for college tuition for 500 students who are interested in a teaching career. In order to maintain the loan granted by the North Carolina General Assembly, the student must agree to teach in the state for at least four years upon graduation from college. In April, Tracie was not only awarded this prestigious scholarship, but she was also admitted to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Tracie always wanted to attend UNC-Chapel Hill, and when she was accepted, she was thrilled to be going to school with many of her friends. This happiness was a bit tainted by the controversy that surrounded some of the Black students' admittance into the University. Tracie explained, "All of us got in…all of us girls who were Black did get in. Two of the white girls didn't get in, so that became a huge issue at my school that year." Tracie admitted that she felt great pressure to prove herself even more academically her senior year because some people did not think she deserved to go to UNC.

Tracie described her initial experience at UNC as an "eye-opener" because she went from "a racially mixed high school to a predominantly white university," which was "interesting." Not only did she experience a culture shock, but she also realized that she did not know how to study. "So, my first year was pretty difficult. I almost lost my scholarship because I wasn't used to studying and I didn't understand the whole concept of studying

because I was so smart in high school; no one told me I had to study anything." Tracie

maintained that her first year as a math major was pretty difficult, and she did not understand

the whole concept of studying because she had been so smart in high school.

Adding to the complexity of her situation, she felt as if she had no support system.

Although many of her friends also attended UNC, they had pretty much decided they did not

want to stay "stuck up under each other." Tracie recalled, "We purposefully branched out. I

was one who didn't branch out as much as the others, so I didn't know anyone. The first

year, I actually went back home every weekend." She admitted that by going home every

weekend she did not utilize that whole "learning experience." By the end of her first year at

UNC, Tracie was placed on academic probation through the Teaching Fellows Program and

began thinking she was not interested in teaching any longer. She admitted,

> I started thinking I didn't want to teach in the first place, and that is when I changed
> my major from math…it started off being math, but I changed it to computer science
> because my whole goal was not to teach. So I was like, I'll just major in something
> non-teacher like because it was something that could not be held against me.

When she finished the spring semester of her freshman year, Tracie fully intended to return

the next fall, give up her Teaching Fellows scholarship, and major in computer science.

Despite her challenging first year at UNC, Tracie's desire to teach was rekindled the

subsequent summer. In May, the Teaching Fellows participate in a statewide bus tour of

different types of schools across the state of North Carolina. Tracie explained that this

experience showed her various types of high schools and programs that challenged her

conception of schooling. Tracie's eyes lit up as she explained,

> I was at the beach one day and I was in the Triangle the next day. And we went to the
> mountains, which was really fun. We got to see alternative schools, private schools,
> charter schools, but it was mostly public though. We got to experience both
> elementary and high school.

While on the Discovery Tour, Tracie's interest in teaching high school was revived, and she gained a new outlook on college life that would ensure her success the following semester.

In the fall of her sophomore year of college, Tracie acquired a resident advisor position, which encouraged her to "branch out more." While doing her youth apprenticeship class in high school, Tracie realized that she enjoyed helping her peers and advising those students who were younger than her. She was reminded of this experience when she accepted the resident advisor position, which she maintained for two years. During her sophomore and junior years of college, Tracie also became an orientation leader at UNC, which she explained made her more excited about teaching. In her capacity as an orientation leader, Tracie worked with incoming freshmen "teaching them the ropes and having small group discussions about the different work ethic [they] need and the different clubs [they] could join." These leadership roles not only allowed Tracie to meet more students at UNC, but they also enabled Tracie to get to know members of her Teaching Fellows cohort who were also involved in such activities.

With this newly developed sense of self and focus on mentoring others, Tracie recommitted herself to a career in teaching and changed her major from computer science to English. She noted, "English has always been a love of mine. I don't know why I didn't major in it from the beginning, but I majored in English and began tutoring in Chapel Hill a little bit and got a little experience with Durham schools." During her junior year at UNC, Tracie dated a man who taught at Crosstown. While he worked there, Tracie often visited the school and observed teachers and students in the classroom environment. She also was able to meet the principal and assistant principal and let them know that she was interested in teaching in Durham, "in a school like Crosstown." Because of these visits, Tracie realized

that she wanted to teach in a school "that was not as privileged, one that was difficult."

Tracie decided that the challenges that she had faced in college always made her stronger; therefore, she wanted a challenge in her first year of teaching. Tracie told me that she knew many people who "want to go to an easy school first, but for the most part, I didn't want to do that...I just felt like this was where I was needed most, or a place like this."

Teaching Philosophy

Tracie's experience at influenced her desire to teach in an urban area, and when she applied for a student teaching placement, she requested to stay in Durham. She was placed at a school with a population very similar to Crosstown High School and is located in the same district. During Tracie's student teaching internship, she taught British literature to a standard 12th grade class. She mentioned that although these were not advanced or even college-bound students, she was able to establish a classroom community, which she explains is the most important part of her teaching philosophy. Tracie emphasized,

> It's (establishing classroom community) always the first thing I like to do, which can backfire at times, but just because they get to know you so well, just because you've got to rope them back in. Because they are so used to telling you all about their day and life, but it just makes teaching, for me, a lot easier because they are comfortable with me and I'm comfortable with them.

When I asked Tracie about readings that might have influenced her perspective on classroom community, Tracie mentioned that she remembered bell hooks' text, Teaching Community. Tracie recalled that hooks writes about teachers working together with students to create a space of mutuality and respect in the classroom. Tracie shared,

> I think that by developing community, I develop mutual respect with my students. So, they know something about me, and they offer something to me about themselves. And I think we have common ground, and in a selfish way, it helps me prepare lessons more because I know what they enjoy and what they hate.

Even while student teaching, Tracie noticed that her students would come to her for things other than teaching—personal issues and other classes for example. Tracie made sure to transfer the development of classroom community into her teaching practice when she secured her first teaching position in the fall of 2007 at Crosstown High School.

First Year Teacher

Tracie honed her teaching philosophy and identity during her studies in the Masters of Arts in Teaching program at UNC-Chapel Hill. After earning her Bachelor of Arts in English from UNC in the spring of 2006, Tracie entered the MAT teaching licensure program and engaged in coursework and an internship as part of her studies. It was during her first course in the summer of 2006 that Tracie and I met—I was a first-time instructor of the Introduction to Teaching course, which provides a foundation for teaching. This course introduces pre-service educators to topics concerned with classroom management, creating lesson plans, establishing classroom community, differentiated instruction, and understanding the diverse nature of students in public schools. During this five-week course, Tracie and I chatted often and commenced what would become a sort of mentor/protégé relationship that continued throughout her year in the program. Although I was not her student teaching supervisor, Tracie often emailed me to ask for suggestions about teaching *Macbeth* and other pieces of literature. Her student teaching supervisor updated me on her progress as she knew that Tracie and I had developed a bond while she was in my class.

Upon graduation from the MAT program, Tracie was offered a job teaching English language arts at Crosstown High School. Although Tracie was excited to begin her teaching career, she quickly became disheartened to learn that she would be teaching AP English Language and Composition to a group of 10th grade students. It is important to note that

ordinarily, in the North Carolina public schools, students only have the opportunity to take the AP Language course in their eleventh grade year after successfully completing two courses in English. Additionally, across the nation, students who typically choose to take AP tests are from white, middle class background with strong educational performance on End-of-Course tests and excellent grades in English language arts (College Board, 2006). There is currently pressure to include more students of color in AP curriculum in an attempt to reduce the national achievement gap. In 2005, only 30 percent of graduating high school seniors enrolled in AP courses were students of color (College Board, 2006).

When I asked why she thought the administration had placed these students in her class, Tracie hypothesized that this group of students was placed in this course in order to fulfill an "administrative quota for the inclusion of minority students in AP courses. These students were set up to fail. They are not prepared to take this course." From the beginning of the school year, Tracie also revealed, "I did not receive proper training, administrative support, or curriculum materials to enable me or my students to be successful in achieve the goals of this course."

Not only was Tracie responsible for preparing her students for the AP exam, but she also had to prepare them for the tenth grade North Carolina Writing Test. Tracie also had to prepare two sections of ninth graders for the English I End-of-Course exam, which is part of the statewide accountability system mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.[26] Creating two separate lesson preparations for courses that have state-mandated final exams places an incredible amount of pressure on a first-year teacher because of how the state evaluates the school based on student performance on these tests. Tracie admitted early in

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[26]For more information about the Annual Yearly Progress goals for North Carolina Public Schools, please see *www.dpi.state.nc.us/nclb/abcayp/ayp/*.

the first part of the fall semester of 2007 that she felt overwhelmed. She explains, "Some days, survival is my primary goal."

Tracie began her teaching career believing all her students could be successful in school and hoped they would perform well on the AP Language test; thus, early in her first year of teaching, she requested my assistance in developing curricula and teaching methods to ensure that this would happen. Tracie asked me to mentor her through her first semester of teaching because she had not be assigned a formal mentor in her content area. While discussing what she would like my role to be in her classroom, she responded, "Bridge the gap between the MAT and first year…It's a connection that you don't get otherwise…You remind me of those articles and what I read while in the program. You get me to think back to the theory that I learned in the program." She truly wanted to utilize the theory she learned while in her teacher preparation program, but knew that most of it was falling by the wayside because she had so many other elements to consider. In late-September of 2007, I drove the 16 miles from Chapel Hill to eastern Durham to begin my observations of Tracie's second period AP English Language and Composition course.

Back to School

Tracie and I scheduled my first observation for Thursday, September 27, 2007. Arriving at Crosstown High School during a class change meant that I had to navigate the halls of this sprawling brick building while dodging the shifting bodies of teenagers. As I strode down the hall, straight-backed, attempting to appear confident, I felt quite anxious because I was a small person in a sea of quickly moving, loud-talking adolescents. Although I had supervised student teachers in my role as a teaching assistant, I was a bit anxious because I had not worked in a large high school with a large population of minority

teenagers. My apprehension did not stem from prejudice, but instead was heightened by the unknown expectations of Black, White, and Latino students who have assuredly had their own experiences with White, female teachers. These thoughts and emotions gave me a rush of adrenaline that propelled me toward Tracie's class in room B24.

When I entered Tracie's classroom, I noted the bareness of the cream-colored cinder block walls. Tracie had no posters or student work brightening the drab space, which was made only bleaker by the brown speckled tile floors. The desks were arranged in groups: two sets on either side of the classroom, facing inward to the center, and one group in the center facing the white-board at the front of the class. The only computer perched on the edge of Tracie's desk by the window in the front left corner of the room. Because she shared the room with another teacher, mathematics textbooks lined the bookshelf along the back wall, and there was another small teacher desk in the back left corner of the room. A tall, metal bookshelf stood in the front right corner and was littered with used, torn literature books, which appeared to be several years old.

As I squeezed around the bodies huddled near the classroom entrance, I found Tracie, who invited me to sit at the desk in the back of the room. We had already discussed that I would first observe her class and then give her feedback on her teaching practices and possible ways to improve her lesson introducing Act IV of The Crucible (Miller, 1953), a play about the Salem Witch Trials in 17th Century America. Acting in the role of mentor, I had already requested the lesson plan for the day and was excited to see how the activities proceeded. After settling in to the seat at the back of the room, the bell rang, announcing the beginning of the period. Students were moving into their desks, and for the first time, I was able to note who these teenagers were. My observation notes for the day reveal that there

were twenty-three students in attendance; of those students (who later self-identified in a written statement), there were fifteen Black females, three White females, one bi-racial female, two Black males, one White male, and one Chinese male.

After introducing me as her former teacher, Tracie began class with an activity that she called "Good News," in which each student had the opportunity to share with classmates something positive that was going on in their lives. I was intrigued by how many students contributed what I would consider very private information. For over twenty minutes, the students talked about family matters, relationship issues, and altercations with other teachers. Even with an outsider in the class, the majority of the students openly expressed emotions of excitement, love, and exasperation. When I asked about this later, Tracie explained that this was a part of her lesson every day, her way of "keeping up with what's going on in their lives." Over the course of the first month of school, Tracie had used this time to develop a sense of community within the walls of her classroom. She explained, "If students did not feel comfortable in my class, then they may not take academic risks or discuss controversial topics." Throughout my observations over the next few months, I realized that Tracie's students trusted her with very private information and responded to her as if she was their friend as well as their teacher.

Following this initial activity, Tracie's lesson became quite traditional; she administered a reading quiz on Act III of *The Crucible*, which the students had been reading on their own outside of class over the previous two weeks. As Tracie asked questions, students independently wrote their answers on pieces of paper, and then they graded each other's quizzes immediately afterward. Following the quiz, Tracie engaged students in a discussion about the Puritan work ethic and how difficult it might be to make a public

confession to crimes; this conversation elicited strong comments by students. Although I did not note the explicit comments at the time, I commented on Tracie's use of praise in order to encourage students to participate in the discussion. I also noted how students were polite to one another and appeared to respect the backgrounds and perspectives of their peers.

According to my observation notes from that class, the female students dominated the classroom discussion and spoke over the male students when they offered very few comments. During the dialogue, the bell rang, and the students rushed out of the classroom without Tracie having the opportunity to conclude the lesson or provide closure to the discussion.

At this point, Tracie and I discussed the lesson, and I explained that she did a strong job of planning a lesson that met the goals and objectives of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the AP Language and Composition course. I also suggested that students might propose discussion questions in lieu of having a reading quiz and that she might want to start the class with an opener and save the "Good News" activity for the end of class in order to organize students for the lesson from the beginning.

Tracie responded, "I thought about that, but I wanted to make sure I was able to talk to the students and hear about their lives before I ran out of time for the day." According to Tracie, the development of community among her students is one of the most important aspects of teaching. She defines community as "the exchanging of who you are. Where you come from, what your hopes are, what your dreams are, where you want to be, what you think you are now, where you think you'll be."   Tracie explained to me that at the beginning of the school year, she spent a lot of time telling her students where she was in high school and the type of person she was. She admits, "I was not the best student in the world, nor was

I the best person in the world." With a huge smile developing on her face, she told me that the students find it "hilarious" that she tells them the truth about her school experience.

Tracie's reasoning for being honest with her students is that "they're not perfect and they're not going to be perfect and part of it is by knowing someone who is older who is willing to say 'I screwed up, I made mistakes, and I almost lost my college scholarship.'" She considers herself a success story and feels that if students can identify with someone who made mistakes, but still graduated from college and a Masters degree program, they may be encouraged to do the same. Tracie also believes that if she incorporates the knowledge the class learns about each other then they can plan lessons together and her class can be more student-centered.

Tracie also wants to hear about her students' personal lives because she thinks this practice helps them develop trust in her, which is indicative of a culturally-responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000) approach to teaching. She explained,

> It helps me to know their home situation so that when they are not exactly happy about the day, I can say, you know, is there something wrong with mom, dad, sister, brother, it makes them a little easier to deal with them. Their attitudes might not be because they don't want to do work, it might be because of something else.

Tracie's acknowledgement that school may not be the more important aspect of her students' lives demonstrates the respect she has for her students.

After explaining her position on the "Good News" portion of her class, Tracie informed me that the students would be coming back to the class after lunch for 30 more minutes. She mentioned that the difficulty she was already experiencing with the course was only compounded by the fact that this class period was split by a lunch period of 30 minutes each day. Tracie revealed that she also did not know the best way to plan her lessons for a class that met for an hour, had a 25 minute break in the middle, and then had 30 more

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minutes of instruction. I noted that we would work on devising a strategy for planning around this lunch break.

After this conversation, I complimented her on the development of a safe space in class where most students appeared to feel comfortable discussing private matters and not fearing judgment. We discussed how the students viewing her as a friend might be both beneficial and detrimental to her in the future. Although it is extremely important for students to trust her, it is also important that they feel challenged by her and understand that she has instructional objectives for her lessons. Tracie explained that our chat was helpful and asked if I would be willing to observe her practice and conference with her more often; I agreed to be her unofficial mentor because I remembered how difficult my first year of teaching was without a mentor in my content area.

Creating a Learning Environment

During the rest of the fall semester, I visited Tracie's class once every two weeks, and we communicated through email about her lesson plans on a weekly basis. Over the course of these visits, using suggestions from our communication, Tracie began creating a colorful, student-centered learning environment in her classroom. The walls slowly began to fill up with colorful student-made posters and examples of their work, like collages of prominent figures from the Harlem Renaissance.

After reading the first formal writing assignments from her students, Tracie's teaching practice changed drastically.   Similar to the personal teaching experience Lisa Delpit (1995) describes in "Skills and other dilemmas," Tracie recognized that her students were not writing clear sentences and did not know how to express their thoughts in a manner that would benefit them on the AP exam. Tracie acknowledged that her students needed

much more writing instruction, and her instruction became much more traditional. She replaced the daily "Good News" sessions with grammar mini-lessons four days per week. Instead of coming in and talking with classmates, now students began class quietly by correcting mechanically and grammatically incorrect statements from their own writing samples that Tracie displayed on the white board with an ancient overhead projector. She hoped this new activity would help students focus on the instructional goals of the day and also improve their writing skills.

Tracie's teaching style was becoming more traditional and authoritative over the months and her students began to rebel against this change. Tracie admitted to me that she changed the format of her lesson and altered her classroom climate because, "I'm afraid the other members in the all White English department will judge me if my students don't pass the AP exam." Thus, Tracie decided to develop a more traditional pedagogy. As the semester continued, Tracie's lessons looked more and more like all the other lessons I had observed during my experience supervising White student teachers from the university.

Following advice I gave her about managing all the paperwork and grading, she created space in the back of the classroom where there were extra materials for student use and a system for students to turn in homework. Tracie also began giving time cues for collaborative group work, and she moved around the classroom more often asking questions when student groups ventured away from the assignments. We discussed that Tracie took some expectations for granted with these students. For example, when she assigned students to "Write a short story about a time when you felt hopeless," one student remarked, "What does that mean?" Although the student understood what the word meant, she could not think of an instance when she actually felt that emotion. At this point Tracie had to engage

students in a conversation about hopelessness and spent an unexpected amount of instructional time giving and soliciting examples from students. She was frustrated after this lesson, and I had to remind her that there would always be days when she would venture from the plan, that if her students needed more guidance, that was her role.

In another instance, Tracie gave an essay writing assignment, but never discussed pre-writing strategies or how the essay would be evaluated. Students explained that they did not know where to start with the assignment, and again, Tracie became exasperated. I suggested that if she could begin the next writing assignment with a brainstorming session, or if students had the opportunity to pre-write about a related topic, her lesson might be more successful.

These were all details that new English teachers have to flesh out as they improve their practice. Had Tracie been assigned a mentor in her content area or shared a common planning time with another English teacher, she may have been able to discuss these teaching strategies in more depth. However, the members of the English department met during her class time and often excluded her from their planning sessions. In our second interview, Tracie remarked, "They plan without me—I'm the one new teacher and they forget about me. On the one early release day, two English III teachers planned without me."

She felt that she was totally on her own in the building without guidance from anyone except her husband, who taught social studies in the class across the hall from her. Like many new teachers without a mentor, Tracie reconsidered her decision to teach and admitted that she struggled on a daily basis. "I just feel like quitting some days. I'm exhausted." I promised to help her through it and continue to work with her on planning and classroom management strategies.

Power Struggles

Around the end of October, Tracie began to recognize power struggles that were developing between the female students in her classroom during whole group discussions. The female students had begun berating one another and refused to speak in the respectful manner in which they had started the school year. After breaking up a "very intense verbal argument" between two students, Tracie sent me an email explaining what had taken place over a week long period that I was unable to observe. She wrote:

> They may look like they love each other when you come it but it's all fake. I made every student write a pledge/contract and sign it explaining how they would behave in class. Since then class has been run a little differently. I run a much tighter ship, I ignore their complaining, and they work non-stop. They are rebelling by falling asleep, talking bad about the class, and doing poor work. It's hurting them more than me. This sophomore class is extremely spoiled and lazy. I love them to death but they have not been taught how to perform in schools. Even this semester, I am the only teacher who actually expects them to do work. In many of their other classes they talk to each other, roam around the room, and fuss with the teacher. In their history class, for example, their teacher often runs out of work for them. How this happens I have no idea. But during third period many of them will return to me because they have nothing to do in that class. That teacher supports this. I thought they were lying until I talked with the teacher who admits to running out of work. As of now, I'm a lot harder and a lot meaner. I try not to yell, but their are times when they understand nothing else.

As I read Tracie's email, I was reminded of the theories associated with critical literacy, multi-cultural education, and culturally-relevant pedagogy I had been reading about in relation to my doctoral studies.

At the beginning of the school year, it seemed that Tracie was genuinely concerned with building community with her students, creating generative lessons that engaged them in critical analysis of texts (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1985) and developing a student-centered, multicultural curriculum (Delpit, 1995) using culturally-relevant teaching strategies (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, their lack of preparation for this course and the students'

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bickering took its toll on Tracie's outlook on teaching, which caused her to tighten the reigns and become more authoritarian in her approach.

Tracie explains the measures that she has taken to try to improve her classroom management.   By having "every student write a pledge/contract," she silences their voices, and requires them to pledge to behave in a manner set forth by her. Instead of continuing to develop her classroom as a generative space where students feel empowered to act differently than traditional schooling models require, Tracie puts a halt to the development of community, turning her classroom into a hierarchy, where her judgment takes priority. By adopting this authoritarian approach to classroom management, Tracie prevents the possibility for further development of community.

In opposition to her earlier position that students' have much more going on in their lives than just school, she takes the students' behavior personally. Tracie judges her students' behavior as rebellious, and she notes that students are "falling asleep," "talking bad about the class," and "doing poor work." She quickly jumps to the conclusion that the students are behaving this way in order to get back at her for assigning so much work. She does not take into consideration that their behavior might be backlash against the type of assignments she makes or the change in her approach to teaching. Tracie writes, "It's hurting them more than me," which I interpret to mean that she is hurting too because she had earlier admitted to hating lecture and "busy work" when she was a student.

Tracie suggests that students "have not been taught how to perform in schools," which supports the traditional banking model that radical education activist Paulo Freire (1970) warns against in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. When Tracie was upset by her students' behavior, she reverted to the traditional banking model which perpetuates the image of the

teacher who assumes a didactic role at the front of the classroom and turns students "into 'containers,' into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Although Tracie later confided in a formal interview that she wanted to create a classroom similar to the spaces envisioned by Freire, at this point, she actually stifled student voice and critical thinking potential by giving them perfunctory tasks like completing worksheets.

It seems that Tracie's frustration also stems from the practice of other teachers in the building who may not have set high expectations for their Black and working-class students. She writes that she is the only teacher who "actually expects them to do work." She explains that in their other classes, students "talk to each other, roam around the room, and fuss with the teacher." In my observations at Crosstown, I noticed that this group of students, which includes one Chinese, one bi-racial, seventeen Black, and four White teenagers, spent much of the day in the same classes with one another and that their other teachers were White females. Although Tracie is condemning these other teachers for not having students complete their work or challenge them with assignments that require critical thought, she may also be just as guilty of not promoting academic and behavioral excellence with her change in attitude and the types of lessons to which she resorts.

Finally, Tracie writes, "As of now, I'm a lot harder and a lot meaner. I try not to yell, but their are times when they understand nothing else." When I asked Tracie if this approach to classroom management had worked for her when she was a student, she responded that her teachers seldom had to do this in her classes. Then, I asked her if her teachers were mostly White, and she replied, "yes." which appears to align with the expectations of Tracie's students.

From my conversations and interviews with Tracie, I learned that she not only grew up in an area that was racially mixed, but at the time of the study, she lived in the community where the majority of her students lived. Thus, I can infer that Tracie was now acting in a manner that she had either learned in her home or had observed parents disciplining their children in her community. Within the first two months of school, Tracie learned that she could not be both friend and teacher and that she would have to act with authority to be treated with authority, as Delpit (1995) puts it. Tracie navigated the complicated situation which placed her in opposition to the very students she had attempted to befriend. Because Tracie had operated in two worlds throughout her life (Black and middle class), she learned both the dominant Discourse (Gee, 1996) that had ensured her academic success and the secondary Discourses (Gee, 1996) of her home. Now, she had to decide which would be most appropriate in her classroom setting. Although it took several weeks, she was eventually able to both talk with her students in the authoritative manner (Delpit, 1995) that their White teachers may have feared and bond with the majority of her students based on a shared cultural identity.

Layered Curriculum

While navigating this classroom dynamic, Tracie planned to implement a different instructional approach in the second quarter of school; she developed a unit she called "layered curriculum." After this less-dialogical unit was complete, Tracie explained,

> The layered curriculum exercise actually worked well and it took a lot of pressure off of me. For once the students were responsible for their own work and their own grades. I did not have to stand in front of the class and dictate to them what they were doing for the day and this eliminated a lot of the moans and groans I get when work is introduced. For now, I am going to continue with layered curriculum in small doses. It allows them to explore the material more in class and I get more one on one time with each student. It also results in less grading because much of it is graded in class

as they go. By the time I receive the actual documents I am usually only grading a paper or two (personal communication, 23 November 2007).

Although Tracie did not implement layered curriculum again in that semester, it seemed as if she was revitalized by the effect that this more traditional type of assignment had on her students. It seems as if Tracie was revitalized by the brief hiatus from discussion-centered instruction, and she was ready to try to attempt a more dialogical approach to instruction again.

While the next two units (Realism and Romanticism) were a bit traditional, they had vestiges of critical literacy development. When discussing the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, Tracie challenged her students to find examples of modern music and poetry that contained themes similar to the literature. Students briefly engaged with these examples from popular culture during a short lesson near the end of the semester.

Development of Critical Literacy

In late November, Tracie and I met to discuss units she wanted to implement during the spring semester. During this meeting at a local coffee shop, Tracie explained that she wanted to help her students develop skills to examine media and texts, which she remembered as concepts learned as part of her English Methods course the fall semester of her MAT program. Tracie asked me to help her better understand the concepts and theories involved with the development of critical literacy and media literacy, which she defined as a way to engage her students who "enjoy voicing their opinions and feelings about the world around them…Students who are able to dialogue about the texts they read seem to learn a great deal more and value their educational experience." Tracie admitted that although she had read the articles for the course, she did not understand the relevance for her classroom. Then, she described her plan for instruction in the spring semester.

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In addition to covering the standard curriculum for English III, her goal was to engage students in three overarching units that would take up the majority of the semester. Not only did she want to plan lessons and activities that would improve her students' ability to write well for the AP Language and Composition exam, but she also wanted to engage them in critical readings of multiple texts from authors of multicultural backgrounds. Her plan also included a unit that would teach students how to examine different forms of media as text and critique the messages presented in by these texts. Tracie hoped to engage students in the production of some form of counter-text to the selected media and present these to an audience in some format as a final project for the course.

As Tracie described her goals, I began to think about the articles I had just read in preparation for my comprehensive exams only four months earlier. I immediately was reminded of the Behrman (2006) article on the most common practices used by teachers focused on critical literacy development. It seemed as if Tracie was rattling off this same list while explaining how she would like to approach lesson planning for the next semester. This is the point at which I decided there might be an opportunity to conduct my dissertation study with Tracie and her students in order to better understand how teachers actually go about implementing a pedagogy that supports critical literacy.

As Tracie described her plans for the following semester, she did not categorize them in the same manner in which I have below, but when I offered her Behrman's (2006) article, she also began to see the connections. In the next section, I describe how the instructional units Tracie planned to develop in the spring semester aligned with the most common practices reported by teachers who implemented a pedagogy that supported critical literacy development.

Tracie also began telling me about other smaller units she was planning for the beginning of the semester. She explained that since she taught students *The Crucible* (Miller, 1951) and *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) in the fall, she was no longer sure she wanted read *Death of a Salesman* (Miller, 1949) as well. She explained,

> I'm now looking at *A Raisin in the Sun* (Hansberry, 1959); I just don't want to drill the American Dream from the White perspective when I know we've been over it before. With Raisin in the Sun they would explore the American Dream from the African American perspective and now that I've looked at the lessons I think that would be a good topic as well.

She then described the supplementary texts that she would use in the introduction of her unit on the play; she had already developed a slideshow of images from the Civil Rights Movement, which portrayed powerful images of peaceful sit-in participants being sprayed with water hoses and dogs being unleashed on crowds of protesters. In addition to engaging the students in an examination of the images, she also wanted students to analyze Langston Hughes' poem, "Dream Deferred" (1951) and Sam Cooke's song "A Change is Gonna Come" (1964), which expresses the hopes of Black Americans during the Civil Rights movement. Tracie hoped to engage students in a reading of the play that represented the concept of the American Dream from the perspective of working-class Black citizens. Tracie's plans for her unit on A Raisin in the Sun were in line with other teachers who focus on the development of critical literacy.

Multiple Texts

Although Tracie had a very specific assigned reading list prepared to align with the expectations of the AP Language and Composition exam, she explained that these texts were mostly canonical works written by male authors of European descent. The opportunity to

read these texts provided a way to increase understanding of rhetorical strategies, but did not enable her to introduce multicultural literature. Consequently, she decided to introduce literature circles as a means by which to include authors from multicultural backgrounds and to which the students might be able to relate.

She reminded me of the previous fall when I had visited her English methods class and explained the process and benefits of using literature circles with high school English students (literature circles were the focus of my Masters thesis in English education). Having tested different methods of implementing literature circles several times in my own practice, I was able to provide Tracie all of my handouts and suggestions for including this teaching strategy in her practice.

Reading from the Resistant Perspective

Tracie also mentioned that she wanted to create a lesson around *When the Levees Broke,* Spike Lee's (2006) four part-documentary about Hurricane Katrina. Her motivation for wanting to use this text was that it "interweaves mass media with interviews of victims, which provide an alternative reading of the event than most of the kids may have seen." Although she was unsure at this point how or when she would be able to use the documentary, Tracie was certain she wanted to "dialogue about the events and how the events were portrayed to the public." Not only would this unit provide students with examples of a resistant reading, but would also engage them in their own resistant readings of mainstream media.

Producing Counter-texts

Tracie's decision to have students create final projects in which they produce their own messages about their perspectives of Hurricane Katrina also aligns with another

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common practice found in classrooms that promote a critical literacy—the production of counter-texts (Behrman, 2006). This approach to curriculum offers students the opportunities to speak from the point-of-view of those voices that are often silenced or marginalized, thus empowering them. Although she had not yet determined the format students would use to create these counter-texts, Tracie mentioned that she would love for students, "to write children's books or a play that could be presented to an audience." The literature on critical literacy suggests that when students produce counter-texts and evaluate the process they used in order to construct the text, they legitimize their own voices.

Student Choice for Research Projects

When I asked Tracie how she would have students create a product to express their perspectives about Hurricane Katrina, she explained that she wanted them to conduct research on a related topic that they wanted to know more about. In order for her students to develop critical literacy, Tracie wanted them to identify a topic from the documentary and find out more about how the breakdown in communication across several government agencies disenfranchised an entire group of economically disadvantaged and minority citizens.

Participating in Social Action Projects

Moving students to social action is also a practice characteristic of critical literacy development; Behrman (2006) suggests that teachers who engage students in social action projects hope to improve the conditions of their communities. Once students learn to analyze the inequities that exist in schooling and society, they may decide to engage in social action in order to transform the structures that perpetuate the injustices. Prior to ever implementing the unit plan on *When the Levees Broke*, Tracie had already decided that she wanted to

engage her students in a project that would take the messages of the injustices experienced by the victims of Hurricane Katrina into the community. Although we did not have an actual plan, we had the expectation that students would present these messages to an audience with the goal of exposing how mainstream media and even the government perpetuate social injustice. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I will describe how students actually came to the idea of participating in social activism on their own during the implementation of the unit on Hurricane Katrina.

At the end of our meeting that day, I explained my interest in conducting a research study in Tracie's classroom. We ended our meeting that day excited about the possibilities of working together in the coming spring semester.

This meeting did not conclude our work together the rest of the fall semester in 2007. Over the month of December, I met with the principal, who gave me contact information and instructions for a request to conduct research at Crosstown. During this process, Tracie continued to teach a short unit on argumentative writing, and the daily schedule was often disrupted for benchmark assessments. Near the winter break, Tracie engaged students in an analysis of the rhetorical devices in Michael Moore's (2007) documentary *Sicko*, which presents various international healthcare programs and argues for a national health care program in the United States. Although this would have been a strong lesson to analyze for elements of critical literacy, I did not yet have IRB approval for the study or permission from Durham Public Schools to conduct research at Crosstown. At the end of this first semester, both Tracie and I were motivated by the possibilities for implementing pedagogy that facilitated critical literacy development in the spring semester.

CHAPTER 5

"A Change Gonna Come?":

Critical Literacy in the High School English Classroom

In this chapter I outline the change in my relationship with Tracie over the spring semester of 2008 when I returned to Crosstown High School. I present evidence from lesson plans, in class discussion, and conversations between Tracie and myself to show how we slowly implemented curriculum and pedagogy to support the development of critical literacy with her students.

In the spring semester of 2008, with the permission of both the principal and the Durham Public Schools, I officially began the data collection portion of my research study. Although my initial intent was to develop a clear understanding of how a first year English language arts teacher defined and implemented a curriculum and pedagogical practices to support critical literacy development, my role as researcher quickly changed. In the first week of the new semester, which began in mid-January, Tracie began to feel nauseous and was completely exhausted. Her earlier exuberance and energy were low, and by the time second period rolled around each day at nine in the morning, she was already fatigued. After taking several home pregnancy tests, Tracie excitedly informed me that she was pregnant. Although she had not planned to have children for a few more years, Tracie and her husband Earl were both thrilled with the news.

Due to Tracie's challenging experience her first few months of he pregnancy, my role in her classroom changed drastically. At first, Tracie asked me to cover her class when

she had to bolt for the restroom, and during these mornings I developed a closer bond with her students. Because Tracie and I had planned much of her curriculum together, I was comfortable in my role as her substitute, and I often picked up with her lessons when she was unable to remain in the classroom. Some days Tracie would remain in the classroom, but asked me to facilitate the class discussions or work with students on independent assignments. Consequently, the students began to ask me permission to go to the restroom or library, solicit my feedback on writing assignments, and eventually, view me as a collaborative teacher in their classroom.

Challenging the 'dominant literacies'

As previously mentioned, Tracie wanted to focus on the development of critical literacy and critical media literacy in her units the second semester of the school year. In the fall semester, students read several poems by Emily Dickinson, essays by Thoreau and Whitman, and speeches given by political leaders of America like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy. The works of European and American male authors that filled the pages of the textbook had the potential to dominate the course. However, with my assistance, Tracie began to plan units that would supplement this literature with examination of multi-cultural literature written by modern American authors.

While we wanted to engage students in critical literacy development, neither of us really knew how that could be done. Consequently, as the semester continued, we developed lesson plans that allowed us to slowly implement a more critical approach that supplemented more traditional lesson formats. Tracie designed a unit on *A Raisin in the Sun*, which she hoped would include the first of the lessons developed to facilitate critical literacy with her students. Additionally, as we began working more collaboratively, we sought to

engage students in the development of writing portfolios using prompts that encouraged development of voice and opinions, and we made a first attempt at literature circles in order to provide access to multi-cultural literature that might engage students in development of critical analysis of novels. As a final attempt to facilitate the development of critical literacy with this group of high school English students, we also developed a unit based on the documentary, *When the Levees Broke* (Lee, 2006).

In the section below, I explain how we incrementally added elements of critical pedagogy to more traditionally formatted units and how eventually, we were able to plan a unit that we felt engaged students in acquisition of critical literacy.

A Raisin in the Sun

Early in the spring semester of 2008, Tracie planned an implemented a unit on Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which is a play (based on Hansberry's life) that tells the story of a Black family living on the South Side of Chicago in the 1950s. Tracie independently developed the unit to introduce and engage students with this piece of literature. Although much of the unit focused on the traditional practice of having students read the play aloud in class, Tracie included several activities that engaged students in elements of critical literacy development.

In order to provide historical context for the play, Tracie developed a slide show of images of the racial unrest in America during the time in which the play is set. On a Friday morning in February, as students watched the violent images of dogs being unleashed on peaceful protestors and police spraying demonstrators with fire hoses, the classroom was silent except for the music and words of Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come," which

Tracie included as a soundtrack. After the short video concluded, Tracie asked, "Where have you seen images like these?"

Several students raised their hands, and I heard, "the Civil Rights Movement," "the Little Rock Nine," "a little girl named Ruby," "*The Watsons go to Birmingham.*" Students demonstrated that they may not have seen these exact images, but they had prior knowledge of people and historical events associated with the themes presented by the video.

Tracie then asked, "What do you know about these images?"

Students slowly began listing names and events from this dark period in American history: Ruby Bridges, Rosa Parks, the bus boycott. In order for students to understand the severity of the brutality, Tracie explained, "This was a serious time; people died. They used hoses and dogs, and people got beaten. How did these images make you feel?"

Cindy, a White female, declared, "This kind of makes White people hate their own kind."

Marcy, a Black female mentioned, "It reminds me of *Eyes on the Prize*."[27]

Sally, another Black female suggested, "Black people tried to achieve something so simple as education (in reference to the picture of the Little Rock Nine entering Central High School) and ignorant White people were screaming at them."

Tracie took this opportunity to suggest that she included images of White people who were also fighting for civil rights in the south and that those people were also sent to jail and sprayed with hoses. Then Tracie asked, "Are we still facing prejudice and racial issues today?"

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[27] "Eyes on the Prize" is a television series produced by the Public Broadcasting Service that uses modern interviews and historical documents to present the major events of the Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1985. Retrieved from, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/about/index.html.

Lina, a Black female student who often contributed to class discussions referred to some schools that have, "separate proms and student governments for Black students and White students."

Tracie responded to Lina in an attempt to include more students in the conversation, "So, is the situation any better than it was?" This question sparked discussion and a bit of controversy.

Tonya, a White female suggested, "It's sugarcoated now…behind closed doors, people still stick to their ways. We are still socially segregated—Blacks and Whites segregate themselves."

This comment was followed by examples of how the White kids and Black kids still sat separately in the cafeteria and that people pick their friends based on similar interests and "comfort zones." Tracie took this opportunity to ask "What's the difference between racism and prejudice?"

Sally, who is Muslim had the most to contribute to this question. She began,

> Racism and race is taboo and everyone feels uncomfortable. People are very nonchalant about the 'N' word…To me, it does mean something as does, 'acting White.' Like the other day, I had this White lady substitute in my Chemistry class. She talked about my head "thingy" and started talking about Muslims, but didn't have the knowledge or grace to speak intelligibly. She could have just asked me, I would have explained to her why I wear this.

Sally was upset because people will not ask her questions even if they do not understand something. She says that's the difference between racism and prejudice: "Racism is based on the color of your skin, while prejudice can be judgment for anything."

Although we ran out of time for further discussion on this day, Tracie and I decided that we should engage students in more discussion about the historical events and social

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movements associated with the time in which the play was set. We developed some questions that we would ask students at the beginning of class the following Monday.

When students came to class on Monday morning, Tracie challenged them to think more about the discussion of civil rights and history. "We are going to write a paragraph about what you think is your role in this matter (perpetuation of prejudice and racism) today. What is your role in society? How can you make a difference in society? I want you to think about what your role is in changing people's perceptions or ideas in regard to prejudice, discrimination, or racism."

As I walked around the classroom, I noted several student responses were vague, so I encouraged them to be specific about what they wrote. Because Tracie was feeling ill this morning, she asked me to lead the discussion. When I pulled the class back together, they shared the answers they had written on their papers. Students wrote that they could: "educate others," "set examples through behavior," "not participate in stereotyping," "show respect for other cultural practices and knowledges," and "ask questions when we don't understand certain cultural differences."

The next question that Tracie and I wanted students to think about was where stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination begin. Students listed "home," "education," "elementary school," "values," and "what society says is cool" as some of the places that foster discrimination and prejudice. Then, because we wanted students to examine their role in questioning and changing these conditions, we asked them what, specifically, they could do to help stamp out these practices. Students discussed the possibilities of mentoring younger students; sitting with different people in the cafeteria to learn more about them; setting examples through behavior; creating a peer mediation group so that people can learn

to ask questions that might deflate such situations; bring a "Peace Week" program (Durham County high schools) to local elementary and middle grades.

The point of having this conversation with students was to implicate them in the development of change within their community. By discussing possible actions they could take to decrease discrimination and prejudice, Tracie and I hoped that students would see that they had a role in changing the way people viewed the world. The students examined how they could change the way that people deal with differences and most of their suggestions included asking questions when unclear about a cultural difference. This lesson demonstrated some elements of critical literacy in that we used multi-cultural literacy and media texts to generate discussion critiquing power and social relationships (Delpit, 1992; Giroux, 1993).

After this discussion, Tracie reminded me to ask students about the messages presented by Sam Cooke's song, "A Change is Gonna Come." I asked students who they thought Cooke was and why they thought he wrote this song. Many of them had heard the song before and knew that Sam Cooke was a Black rhythm and blues and gospel singer from the south. I played the song again and asked students to examine his words. After listening to the lyrics (APPENDIX IV), they explained that the song was about the struggle of Black people seeking equal rights, and many nodded their heads when Sally said that it offered "hope" in a time of "racism and prejudice." Lina suggested that even though the music sounded "sad," Cooke provided a message that he "knew change was gonna come to his people—a positive change."

After we discussed this song, I asked students to think about current popular songs that offered messages of hope for change or focused on significant social or political themes.

Immediately students began discussing "Yes We Can," the most popular song/video being downloaded from dipdive.com, which touts itself as "A Lifestyle Engine for Music, Arts, Action & More." This song, produced only one week prior to this discussion, presented another message of "hope" for change in America. This time, the message echoed the words of then-Senator, Barack Obama, a Black political leader whom many of the students wanted "to win the presidential election." Although I had not heard the song at the time, we quickly accessed it through the Internet and were able to discuss how this song and video represented the current political atmosphere in America. Students were excited about the song/video because, according to Marcy, it "had people from all races and backgrounds singing the same message."

I asked students what that message was, and Marcy responded, "That we, as Americans, have the power to change the way things are. We are all so sick of Bush and not feeling like we have a say in our own country…the war and well, just everything. I feel like things are gonna change, like we're gonna matter for once." When I asked what she meant by "we," she said, "Everyone…everyone. Black, White, young, old, rich, poor…not just rich, old White guys anymore." Marcy's classmates nodded in agreement.

Several more song titles were suggested during this dialogue: "Georgia Bush," by hip-hop artist Lil Wayne (2006), which I learned is a song about how the media presented the people of New Orleans, LA after Hurricane Katrina and how President Bush did not respond to their needs; and "The Morning News," by hip-hop artist Chamillionaire (2007), a song that critiques the mainstream media's fascination with White celebrities and the negative portrayal of Black Americans. I was impressed by the students' introduction of these songs about which I had never heard. Had I been prepared with these songs and we had more time,

this dialogue could have continued and we might have spent more time comparing the messages presented in these three songs. However, class ended, and I was unable to attend their class the next day. Tracie did not continue this discussion because she planned to begin the reading of *A Raisin in the Sun.*

Literature Circles

Tracie and I also attempted to develop critical literacy in the literature circles unit. Although the state's standard course of study does not require specific texts be used in the AP English Language course, a lack of funds and resources limited Tracie to teaching the content of her textbook. Tracie mentioned that she wanted to use literature circles with her English III class to introduce novels written by authors of various cultural backgrounds, but the school book room did not have enough copies of any of the texts she wanted to teach. Thus, her students would either have to read the book in pairs at school or go purchase the texts if the entire class read the same book. She thought that by developing a literature circle unit, her students could check out books from the school or public library or even find many of the texts online.

Consequently, Tracie and I planned a literature circle unit using multiple texts (Behrman, 2006) based on a similar theme of struggle based on cultural and ethnic background. After sharing her brief list of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), *The Infinite Plan* (Allende, 1994), and *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* (Alvarez, 1991), she asked if I had any suggestions for other texts that might have similar themes of struggle based on culture. At this point, I added *Wolf Whistle* (Nordan, 1993), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Hurston, 1937), *Like Water for Chocolate* (Esquivel, 1989), and *A Lesson Before Dying* (Gaines, 1993), which I had used as a high school English teacher. We

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selected these texts because they were representative of a diverse group of authors telling stories of diverse characters from multi-cultural backgrounds.

Originally, we hoped to engage students in a research project to learn more about the cultural backgrounds of the authors and the historical time period in which these novels were set. We also wanted to engage students in examination of the presentation of themes and creation of characters of based on information obtained during research. However, because we were unable to schedule time in either the computer lab or the media center because of testing and computer classes, we opted to create a truncated version of this lesson using the mobile laptop station. This lesson was also thwarted because half of the computers on the cart were not in working condition on the day Tracie planned to begin the research project. Tracie emailed me with some concerns after students had been reading their literature circle texts for only a week. She explained that, although she wanted the students to participate in readings of these novels, she did not want to "pile more work on them." She wrote:

> They just aren't motivated, Heather. And it sucks that I spent so much time planning this unit because they enjoy assignments where they can get out of their seats and 'perform' for the class [referring to the presentations they would make on their research]…I'm also allowing them to work in groups more, but they don't concentrate enough to get the work done in a timely fashion.
>
> Not only are they taking AP English this semester but the majority of them are also taking Honors Anatomy and Honors Chemistry. I don't know what dimwit did their schedules this way but it's extremely hard on them…Thankfully my class is not 'homework' focused this semester, which should help to alleviate their stress. I literally had students crying in my class over the workload they are carrying this semester.

Based on her assessment of students' alarming amount of homework and projects being assigned through other classes, Tracie and I decided that we would try a more critical approach to reading and developing literacy later in the semester with the unit on *When the Levees Broke*. Thus, although we had conversations with students about their texts, we were

unsuccessful in our attempts to engage students in formal activities that fostered critical literacy development.

Writing Portfolios

During the same six week period when students were reading their literature circle texts, Tracie and I also implemented a unit focused on the development of writing portfolios. By the end of the unit, students had written six pieces: an original fiction short story, a reflection letter to their children in the future, an autobiographical sketch, one argumentative piece, and two analyses of author's purpose and rhetorical device in pieces of non-fiction. Three of these pieces (the argumentative piece and the textual analyses) were designed to be written in the traditional five-paragraph essay format, while the other three encouraged creative writing. The first three traditional pieces were included to prepare students for the North Carolina state writing test and the AP exam and were skill-driven. These pieces focused on a "back to basics" writing model (Morgan, 1997), and did not challenge students to question or resist the dominant power structure suggested by the literature (Shor, 1999). Without having critical components that involved students in examining the power structures or ideologies presented in the literature, we did not promote resistance, which is a fundamental characteristic of critical literacy.

Additionally, although the more creative assignments challenged students to write original pieces, they did not engage students in examining how they are implicated in identity construction in relation to culture and society, which is also crucial component in a writing program that facilitates the development of critical literacy (Morgan, 1997). In depth

analyses of these individual assignments are not included because Tracie and I did not

develop this writing portfolio with the goals for a critical writing program in mind. We can

not claim critical literacy development without having engaged students in the analysis of

how they construct their identities based on culture and society positions them(Morgan,

1997; Shor, 1999).

When the Levees Broke

The next section of this chapter provides a much more detailed account of a lesson

Tracie and I planned and implemented together. This section takes up most of the chapter

because it contains more specific examples and analyses of just how we engaged students in

examination of a text in order to assist in the development of critical literacy. A couple

months after our initial conversation in the coffee shop, Tracie had more time to think about

how she wanted to implement this unit on *When the Levees Broke.* In an email from late

January, 2008, Tracie had begun to sort out her vision for the unit; her email demonstrated

her excitement about the possibilities about using the documentary:

> Heather-
> I've decided what I want to do with the AP class-I want them to really look at the
> events of Hurricane Katrina. Remember that wonderful documentary I mentioned
> called "When the Levees Broke" by Spike Lee? It was a 4 part mini series on HBO.
> In addition to the movie I came across an entire curriculum designed by a college.
> Using the film, students will interact in small group and large group discussions.
> Handouts have also been provided that include a map of New Orleans, and different
> plans and layouts. I know this could be used just as effectively in a Civics class but I
> think AP would benefit from understanding visual and written rhetoric (articles about
> the events are also included). I'm thinking that I could structure a research project
> around it where they could gather sources and write about their own viewpoints
> (whose at fault, could it have been prevented, would it happen again, was the
> government responsible, etc). I could start this after they have completed their
> literature circle presentations and it would probably be a 3-4 week lesson. I just
> wanted to share. This is something I'm extremely passionate about that I think the
> kids would benefit from researching with a critical eye! What do you think about
> this? I know it's a lot to throw at you but I HAD to share!!!

Tracie's email exudes excitement about using a media text to engage her students in the development of critical literacy and speaks to her critical stance. In this email, Tracie suggests that she wants students to understand not only the "visual and written rhetoric," which are socially constructed methods of communication (Kellner & Share, 2005), but she also wants to engage students in a resistive reading of the text (Behrman, 2006), which in this case is a documentary. Tracie explains that she wants students to think more carefully about, who is at fault for not rescuing the victims of Katrina, whether or not it "could it have been prevented," what would be the possibility that something like this would happen again, and whether the government was at fault for the devastation. Engaging students in this form of "reading" in a reflective manner and critiquing the dominant power structure, in this case the US government, aligns with the goals of critical literacy development (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Giroux, 1993; Kellner & Share, 2005; Shor, 1999). In this email, Tracie demonstrates a commitment to preparing her students how to analyze media in order to better understand how it promotes a message of the dominant power structure and positions "readers" in the perpetuation of these messages.

Although the lesson did not adhere to this original plan of using a pre-packaged curriculum unit, Tracie knew that she wanted to use an example from popular culture to engage her students in examination of documentary as a text. At this point, Tracie did not know the degree to which students had discussed Hurricane Katrina in their school experiences; after all, the majority of them were only twelve- and thirteen-years-old when Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.

Tracie also explained that because of the messages presented in popular music about the controversy surrounding the evacuation of New Orleans and the way that many poor and

Black citizens died unnecessarily, she thought her students would likely be affected by the

movie. Tracie also wanted to provide a model by which students could eventually participate

in their own resistant readings to accounts of the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina as

produced by mainstream newspapers and media outlets. Spike Lee's documentary provided

a ideal example of both how to engage in a resistant reading of mainstream media and

privilege the voices that are typically silenced.

Tracie clarified that she chose this documentary for two reasons—"timeliness and

personal experience." Tracie reminded me,

> I was displaced when Hurricane Floyd flooded my hometown of Rocky Mount in September of 1999. I know what it's like to be scared and homeless for a while. We had to go to a shelter when our house got flooded. Many of my neighbors lost everything.

Tracie also explained that her experiences as a Black female have led her to believe that

those who write the stories produced by mainstream media are reflective of their primary

target audiences and that they do not necessarily have the interests of poor, urban youths in

mind when presenting information. When asked how she saw this unit in relation to the

development of critical literacy, Tracie responded,

> To discuss how America is viewed in the eyes of its people. The unit will be centered on dialogue about the events and how the events were portrayed to the public. I think this would allow students to explore the opinions and experiences of their classmates and give them the opportunity to see their "place" in society (what changes can they make, what power they have, how can they promote change, etc). My idea of critical literacy includes dialogue and equipping students with the necessary tools to explore texts from different angles and viewpoints that they may be able to connect their personal experiences to their classroom lessons.

In this email, Tracie basically reiterates the explanation of how schools can be sites of

development for critical literacy (Aronowitz & Giroux,1985; Giroux 1985; Gee 1990, 1996;

Shor, 1999; and McGregor, 2000). As mentioned in the literature review, Giroux writes that

in order to expose and resist "hegemonic" (Giroux, 1985, p. 26) social structures, schools

must be places where students are given the "theoretical tools" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985,

p. 132) to examine their own socialization in the context of the greater society. Tracie's

explanation of how she planned to use the documentary also focuses the elements of critical

pedagogy that engage students in questioning social ideology, inequality, and oppressive

relationships promoted by texts (media, in this case) (McGregor, 2000).

By encouraging dialogue "to connect [students'] personal experiences to their

classroom lessons," Tracie engages in what Gee (1990, 1996) calls acquisition of secondary

Discourses. In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, I mentioned how Tracie was able to

connect with the majority of her students based on a shared cultural and socio-economic

background. Thus, because she could engage with many of her students in their primary

Discourse (as outlined in chapter two), Tracie was able to facilitate the acquisition of a

secondary Discourse through the implementation of this unit on Hurricane Katrina, which

focuses on both the mainstream media and resistant perspectives of the victims. The

documentary interweaves the voices of people who speak in primary Discourses similar to

the majority of Tracie's students with footage of news media and voices of the experts in the

field of meteorology, engineering, and government. By providing students with examples of

these other Discourses and challenging students to use discipline specific terminology to

compare and contrast how these different groups viewed the response to Hurricane Katrina,

Tracie and I encouraged the acquisition of these Discourses so that students could engage in

discussions about these topics beyond the walls of the classroom. Both the acquisition of a

secondary Discourse (Gee, 1996) and engagement with texts that challenge the dominant

perspective (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Gee, 1990, 1996; Giroux, 1985; McGregor, 2000;

Shor, 1999) involve practices of critical pedagogues concerned with facilitating the development of critical literacy.

Tracie selected this particular text because of Spike Lee's ability to interweave interviews with the people who experienced this tragedy, the images of hungry children in soiled diapers, and footage of deceased bodies on the sidewalk covered with sheets in the heat of the late summer. Tracie explains that she made an intentional move when selecting this video because it resonated with her identity as a Black woman in the south. Since the majority of her students were also Black females, Tracie hoped they would be able to connect with the images and engage in critical dialogue about the documentary.

In designing this unit, Tracie and I first developed six learning outcomes for the students (APPENDIX V):

1. Students will develop skills related to the process of democratic dialogue about controversial issues, especially race and class, as well as the ability to articulate judgments about where they stand based on evidence. (critical literacy)
2. Students will read and react to written text and visual media to understand the dynamics of Hurricane Katrina and the controversies that surrounded it.
3. Students will develop a sense of empathy with victims of Hurricane Katrina, recognizing that all humans are vulnerable to disasters of one form or another.
4. Students will use their new knowledge and skills to get involved in their communities to improve the common good. (critical literacy)
5. Students will use the information they've been presented as well as their own judgments to create and perform a visual representation of the events of Katrina. (critical literacy)
6. Evaluate how a group of citizens becomes the target of discrimination and identify the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship. (critical literacy)

Tracie mentioned that she wanted the students to look at "articles, artifacts, and media…media literacy." She also had a vision of a project which would not only engage students in dialogue about the information they heard and viewed, but also serve as the students' final course exam. At first Tracie envisioned students making books or some form

of media to give to elementary students. By engaging her students in creating these books, Tracie imagined that they would be able to show younger students how Hurricane Katrina victims were treated by the national government and the full extent of the damage and devastation of the storm. However, because of lack of time due to the AP exam, final exams, difficulty acquiring transportation, and little to no connections with teachers in the elementary schools, we decided that the students could write plays, which dealt with specific aspects of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Then, students would present these plays to their peers.

We introduced the project on May 15, 2008. Tracie originally planned to have students respond to a quote from the documentary and images of post-Katrina New Orleans published in the popular news media; however, her frustration with the students' inattentiveness on this day prompted her to simply turn on the DVD player and wait for students to become engaged with the images on the television screen. By not providing a context for the lesson and attempting to explain why we were wanted students to watch the documentary, Tracie lapsed into a non-critical survival tactic consistent with the practice of many first-year teachers at the end of a school year.

At this point in the school year, Tracie and I had developed quite a smooth transition between our two teaching styles. Although she was feeling less nauseous, we continued to co-teach many of the days I visited the school.   I encouraged Tracie to set the tone of the class, and she felt comfortable enough with our relationship to ask me to take over the lesson whenever she was not feeling well. When Tracie began the video, I sat in the back of the classroom and took notes. The following section documents student reactions to the images they saw on the screen once they started to pay attention to the documentary. The initial five

minutes of the first Act of the documentary presents clips of news reports that suggest that New Orleans and most of the Gulf Coast must be evacuated because the levees cannot possibly withstand the force of a Category 5 hurricane.

When the images first lit up the screen, most of the female students continued to sit with their backs to the screen and were not listening to the sound. After the students did not show much of a reaction to the first ten minutes of the documentary, Tracie asked me to talk to them and provide a context for what they were watching. I stopped the video and began to engage the students in a conversation about their initial impressions of the documentary and their memories of Hurricane Katrina. Upon conclusion of the brief conversation, I wrote down what transpired during the impromptu dialogue.

First, I asked students to recall their memories of Hurricane Katrina. Students mentioned that they knew Katrina had been a hurricane that caused flooding in New Orleans, but they were not extremely concerned about it because it seemed so far away from them. Only two students reported having seen the documentary prior to Tracie's class that day, and the majority of students explained they had only briefly listened to news reports about the hurricane. We discussed how Katrina mostly affected the poor and Black citizens of New Orleans because they could not afford to evacuate the city and because their homes were located in the flood plain. Then, I asked students to consider what they might have done if this level of devastation had happened in their town and asked if they knew anyone who was affected by the hurricane. During this discussion, students admitted that they had not considered what they would do if a disaster of this magnitude had affected them. None of the students could recall knowing anyone who had survived or been displaced by Katrina.

Finally, I asked students to pay attention to the video because it presented a view of American citizens that they may have never considered, and I turned the video back on.

This time students were engaged by the testimonies and images they saw. I heard them questioning each other about levees, and there were many gasps and disgruntled comments when President Bush appeared on the screen with no apparent concern about what was going on in the Gulf Coast. Overall, I would describe their reactions to the documentary as overwhelmed and angry.

The first thirty minutes of *When the Levees Broke* are dedicated to setting the stage for Hurricane Katrina and providing a timeline of events. Director Spike Lee interweaves images of residents moving into the Superdome, weather forecasters predicting destruction, and business owners boarding up their shops prior to Katrina with footage of the hurricane as it bears down on New Orleans. Then, Lee depicts the graphic aftermath of the storms— complete with live footage of bloated dead bodies floating in the rising waters, the absolute obliteration of homes, buildings, and cars in the lower Ninth Ward, and diagrams of how the water breached the levees near Lake Pontchartrain. In this first part of the documentary, Lee also includes damning support for the possibility that the levees were intentionally breached by the government in order to save the wealthier neighborhoods of New Orleans.

Through both formal and informal interview footage, Katrina survivors explain the history that fueled the possible conspiracy or urban lore that the government intentionally breached the levees during Hurricane Betsy in 1965. Residents of the city claim that the government blew holes into the levee at that time in order to save the houses uptown, at the risk of flooding those in the Lower Ninth Ward, which is primarily inhabited by poor, Black citizens. Although Lee never actually confirms that this information is true, he uses the

voices of those who remembered the events following Hurricane Betsy to demonstrate the similarities between the government's response to the two storms. After only showing thirty minutes of the documentary, Tracie and I asked students to reflect on the images and information with which they had just been presented.

In the following section, I describe the students' reactions as portrayed in this brief writing assignment. Students were not required to put their names on their responses, nor did they have to turn them in to the teacher; however, all of the students submitted their responses at the conclusion of class that first day.

Student Responses to When the Levees Broke

In order to examine the following student responses to the first part of *When the Levees Broke*, I used a theoretical lens of critical literacy. Through an analysis of student writing samples, I wanted to determine if Tracie and I had achieved our goals of engaging students in a more dialogical manner of teaching and critical reflection (Freire, 1970) that encouraged acquisition of a secondary Discourse, enabling them to critique social and political structures that prevented the victims of Hurricane Katrina from getting aid. Furthermore, I examined student responses to determine if we were successful in engaging students in the learning outcomes we developed specifically to foster the development of critical literacy, more specifically the goals for evaluating how a group of citizens becomes the target of discrimination and identify the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship. By presenting this documentary, Tracie and I attempted to provide a context for analyzing how race and class intersect within power relations, which is a fundamental tenet of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1993).

In the next section, I analyze the responses of two students,—Ron and Asia—and I demonstrate how Tracie and I engaged students in the development of critical literacy through discussion around these two responses. I selected these two responses because they elicited the most dialogue from the entire class. Both Ron, the only White male in the class, and Asia, a Black female whose parents held college degrees, came to this class and this discussion with privilege, but might have also had the most to learn from this conversation due to this privilege. Ron's reflection from class that day provided an opportunity to engage students in a discussion of how economic, social, and political inequities influenced the series of events that followed Hurricane Katrina. Similarly, Asia's reaction expressed the confusion she felt upon hearing the stories of the citizens of New Orleans and the lack of response by the government and professional medical service providers.

Analytical Framework

In this section, I analyze Ron's response using discourse analysis (Gee, 1990) through a lens provided by social critical theorist Henry Giroux (1993), who suggests that educators who engage in critical pedagogy may help students learn to "critically assess dominant and subordinate traditions so as to engage [students'] strengths and weaknesses" (p. 374). The following brief reflection demonstrates how Tracie and I were able to facilitate critical literacy through both written and dialogical reflection.

"Learn to Swim!"

At the time of the study, Ron was a 16-year-old white male—the only white male student in Tracie's class. Over the summer, I asked Ron to tell me a bit more about himself so that I could better understand his perspective. He explained,

> First of all I moved here (Durham, NC) when I was six and I turned seven when we
> were here (1999). Um I'm the youngest, my only brother is 17 (18 in September),

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and he's at NC State beginning his fall semester for electrical and computer engineering. I moved from Pittsfield, MA (7 Flower Drive if you want to google it), and I live less than a mile from southern [gives me his current address], hence the fact that I ride my bike to school. Um, my mom's name is Bonnie and my dad's Brian (all initials are BS in our family, which is kinda cool) and they grew up in New York almost directly across the MA/NY border. My mom is a patent attorney, she works at a patent office "Eclipse." My dad is a carpenter/contractor and he works for himself mostly; he let me come work with him over the summer a lot so I gained more respect for what he does (its very strenuous and time consuming). I wasn't raised very religiously because both of my parents were raised heavily religious and didn't like the feeling of church 24/7 so they decided if I wanted to go to church, I would go. My dad had his special way of raising me…a little unorthodox, but he never really punished me. He would just talk to me one-on-one and he always taught to watch the next thing happening and to know my surroundings.

According to Ron's facebook[28] page, he listens to classic rock, and his interests include

dirtbikes, baseball, basketball, and football and he supported Barack Obama in the 2008

presidential election.

Not the most talkative student, Ron contributed more during partner work or small

group interaction than in whole class discussions. Throughout both semesters, he maintained

a B average and generally turned in his work on time. By the end of the second semester of

school, Ron slowly began to participate in class discussions, but he finally found his voice

during the Katrina Unit.

Ron's Response to When the Levees Broke

> **(1) Intentional destruction of the levees—WHAT THE FUCK!? If you're**
> **(2) gonna build levees, you might as well use them. If you're about to be**
> **(3) flooded, shouldn't you try everything to keep the water out? Is it too**
> **(4) much to ask to try to think about somebody other than yourself? Also,**
> **(5) LEARN TO SWIM! If you live in a city that's below sea level, you**
> **(6) should be able to swim.—Ron, 16-year-old white male.**

In the response above, Ron speaks to two images he viewed in When the Levees Broke—the

possibility that there was an intentional breach of the levees in New Orleans, LA and the fact

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[28]Facebook is a social networking website that allows members to create user profiles that display personal interests, political and religious views, etc.

that many people drowned while trying to escape their flooded homes and neighborhoods. Although Ron's response is brief, it contains multiple layers that provide evidence that he was engaging in social and political critique.

I analyze Ron's written response in a close method, paying attention to his word choice, tone, and manner in which he addresses an audience. Overall, Ron's use of language in his response conveys powerful emotions and critical commentary about both the government and the citizens of New Orleans. In line one (1), Ron critiques the government of the United States: "Intentional destruction of the levees—What the FUCK!? His use of capital letters, coupled with exclamation points and question marks, suggests frustration and disbelief in a system that would sacrifice the lives of citizens. Ron directly addresses the government when he says, "If you're gonna build levees, you might as well use them." On a basic level, Ron is questioning why the government, specifically the Army Corps of Engineers would waste taxpayers' money to build the levees if they were not working correctly. His critique of government speaks to Giroux's (1993) point about questioning the existence of a "democratic and just society" (p. 375). I do not suggest here that this is the first time Ron experienced a sense of incredulity about the government's ability to function in a just capacity for all citizens; however, in this pedagogical space Ron was able to openly evaluate and denounce a government body that seemed to have failed hundreds of thousands of people.

Ron goes on to address the government again in lines two (2) and three (3); he asks, "shouldn't you try everything to keep the water out?" When I prodded Ron to provide more detail during class discussion, he expressed that he did not understand why the government did not take the necessary precautions to protect its citizens from flooding. Ron appears to

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see the government's response to Hurricane Katrina as an obvious lapse in the very

protective role it is supposed to provide for American citizens.

Additionally, in this response, Ron makes a distinction between "you" and "us,"

when referring to the situation. He notes that the government and quite possibly the

wealthier residents were thinking about "yourself" instead of the people who were drowning

in the rising waters. Ron questions the government's actions when he says, "If you're about

to be flooded, shouldn't you try everything to keep the water out?" Essentially, Ron

questions the "institutional privilege[ing]" (Giroux, 1993, p. 369) displayed by a government

that did not protect the citizens, or those viewed as "other" by society. Despite his position

as a member of an educated white, middle-class family, Ron was able to, if only for a

moment, create a border between himself and a government that typically represents his

interests. By contrasting his position on the events as being separate from this government,

Ron briefly crosses the border separating privilege and poverty (and Black and White) in

order to sympathize with the poor and Black victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Regardless of Ron's recognition and commiseration with the "other" in the first part

of his response, he retreats back to the position of privilege in the final two sentences. His

words scream, "LEARN TO SWIM!" as he addresses the people of New Orleans. This

emotional command demarcates him as one who has the privilege to critique or admonish. In

speaking to the people who either were displaced or killed by Hurricane Katrina, he offers a

kind of appraisal of these people with obvious disdain. Again, he segregates himself from

those in the video by addressing them as "you" and by condemning them for not knowing

how to swim despite living below sea level. By suggesting, "If you live in a city that's

below sea level, you should be able to swim," Although Ron's suggestion that the citizens of

New Orleans "learn to swim" is not indicative of a critical lens, his critique of the governmental agencies demonstrates that he had begun to view this section of the documentary in a more critical manner. Not only was he directing his response to the power holders (government and wealthy residents), but also to those residents who were dependent on those who hold that power. Thus, I engaged him and his classmates in a discussion about why some people of color and lower socio-economic status may not have learned to swim at some point in their lives.

When I asked Ron why many of the people in New Orleans may not have known how to swim despite living below sea level, he admitted, "I really haven't thought about it."   At this point, I began thinking about a text I was reading at the time; Timothy Tyson's *Blood Done Sign My Name* (2004), presents the narrative of the racial atmosphere in Oxford, NC, in the summer of 1970. In his book, Tyson recounts the story of how Henry Marrow, a twenty-three-year-old Black man, was shot and beaten by three White men in broad daylight in the middle of town. Tyson, a White, Afro-American Studies professor from North Carolina, explains the racial history of the state and develops the timeline of events leading up to an explosive time in the post-Civil Rights south.

I thought that this text might provide students with a social context for better understanding why some groups of poor and minority citizens may not know how to swim. I described the second chapter of the book where Tyson paints a vivid picture of the Jim Crow south and recounts how divisive relationships between Blacks and Whites developed even more after de jure[29] integration. During this discussion with students, I presented Tyson's description of how the officials of Oxford, NC (which is 30 miles northeast of the city in

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[29]When referring to integration in American history, it is important to note that in the northern states, integration was de facto, meaning done in practice. In the southern states, integration was done in a de jure manner, which means, 'by law' but not necessarily in practice.

which Crosstown High School is located) did not effectively comply with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I explained that Tyson wrote about how the town's leaders immediately elected to close most city parks, including the public swimming pool instead of allowing Blacks the opportunity to use these public spaces. In fact, the city decided to sell Rucker Pool to a White businessman, who then opened it as a recreation area for "whites only" (p. 19). Instead of providing a clear explanation of why this practice may have prevented Black residents from learning to swim, I asked, "What does this mean for some people in this town? How does this discriminatory practice prevent people from having equal access?" I could see the knowing looks begin to develop on the faces of the African American students. Ron still had a confused look on his face. Marcy, a Black female student was quick to clarify that Blacks did not know how to swim then because there was no place to learn.

Upon this explanation, Ron became even angrier; for whatever reason, he had not realized the true impact of segregation and integration on citizens in the south. Growing up in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Ron may have been exposed to the historical facts about events that occurred almost 30 years before his birth, but now he had a context for understanding. Furthermore, because Ron has grown up with Black students in his classes and in his neighborhood, he might not have truly been aware that many people of color did not experience the same privileges afforded to him because of his unearned privilege.

I could see that this discussion problematized Ron's considerations because his classmates were able to "speak from differed histories, location, and experiences identity and perspectives," (Giroux, 1993, p. 367-68) which is one of the goals of critical literacy. Prior to this day, Ron realized that there were racial inequities in his community, but before

watching this documentary and questioning the actions of the citizens of New Orleans, Ron

may not have understood structural and institutional policies that prevented people from

moving out of the economic and social hierarchies into which they had been born or placed.

Tracie and I engaged Ron in a fundamental component of critical literacy when we created

this opportunity to critique the institutional structure that subordinated a group of American

citizens. Furthermore, Ron learned how to enter the "borderlands" in order to reinterpret

"existing configurations of power" (Giroux, 1993, p. 370).

After this dialogue, Tracie and I were both surprised and impressed with Ron's

participation in the class discussion. Typically, Ron did not share his perspectives with the

class unless he was directly asked to answer a question; however, in this case, Ron

volunteered his response and was obviously disturbed by the documentary and our

discussion. I do not provide Ron's response as a paragon of critical literacy development;

however, I believe that Ron was truly engaged in critical analysis of government and social

discrimination through this experience.

Analytical Framework

Once again, I frame my examination of Asia's response using Giroux's (1993) theory

of critical pedagogy, in which he suggests that schools, "both produce and legitimate cultural

differences as part of their broader project of constructing particular knowledge/power

relations and producing specific notions of citizenship" (p. 373). In this unit on *When the*

Levees Broke, Tracie and I created instances to actively work against re-producing dominant

ideologies; instead, we chose to privilege the history, stories, and experiences of the

marginalized, disenfranchised citizens of New Orleans. By using the stories of this group of

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people, in a classroom setting, we legitimized their voices and provided the opportunity for students from similar backgrounds to participate in the writing of history.

In the section that follows, I use Asia's response to the initial assignment to show how one 16-year-old African American female critiques the images presented in the documentary that contrasts with what she has learned in her classes about the medical profession. Parts of this documentary shattered Asia's understanding of doctors and nurses as people who have been revered throughout history for providing medical assistance in times of tragedy and disaster.

"But they'd sacrifice lives to save more money."

According to Asia's facebook page, she describes herself as a Christian and a democratic supporter of Barack Obama. At the time of the research study, Asia was a 16-year-old African American female, who was experiencing changes in her home life. Asia's mother was pregnant with her little brother, and Tracie shared with me that Asia had confided in her that she was "a bit jealous." An intelligent and popular young woman, Asia was a junior varsity cheerleader and a class representative to the student council. As mentioned in chapter four, Asia was one of the young women who had begun acting out in class and actually had a few verbal confrontations with other students. Asia was definitely one of the class leaders, and students often looked to her when determining how they would react to Tracie's directives, assignments, and even participation in discussions.

Asia lived in a neighborhood close to the schools with her "two brothers, one sister, and my mommy." Asia told me, "My mommy graduated from a four-year college with a bachelor's degree and fully expects me to finish college and go to med. school." Although Asia is a strong student, the quality of her work began to deteriorate in the second semester,

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and she was often absent from school due to having the flu. As a result of missing many

days of school, Asia's writing portfolio was done in a hurried manner and did not reflect the

writing ability I witnessed when working with her on assignments.

Asia's response to the first Act of *When the Levees Broke* displays a variety of

emotions and addresses several images, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

(1) I can't really explain how I feel; it's like a large mixture of feeling's.
(2) I'm angry cause I feel like NOW I Know that they could have did so
(3) much more to save so many more people and then I feel sad for the
(4) people who actually had to stay there and sit in the midst of the storm.
(5) I quickly put myself in their position as they began to describe the
(6) sounds and seeing the pictures and the babies, and I can just feel how
(7) I would feel thinking about my family that wasn't right next to me
(8) and how close I'd be holding the ones that were and just praying
(9) hoping that it wasn't one of our time. Then it just adds on to hear
(10) about the whole levee situation cause I didn't even know about the
(11) dynamite and everything and that got me thinking even more that
(12) they can't sacrifice money to save more lives, but they'd sacrifice
(13) lives to save more money.

Again, I engaged in a close reading of Asia's reflection using Gee's (1999) work in

discourse analysis. Although Asia's response is brief, it speaks about three different issues

depicted in the documentary. In line one (1), Asia states, "I can't really explain how I feel:

it's like a large mixture of feeling's." She expresses confusion in the emotions she feels

upon learning more about the response of the medical community and the government to the

victims of Hurricane Katrina. Although she did not include this in her response, my notes

from classroom observations and personal conversations with Asia reveal that she wants to

join the medical profession once she graduates from college. Consequently, I know that she

was deeply disturbed when the documentary showed images of many of the doctors and

nurses in New Orleans fleeing the hospitals, leaving patients to die by themselves. In lines

two (2) and three (3), Asia says, "NOW I Know that they could have did so much more to

save so many more people," she is referring to the members of the medical profession (i.e. doctors, nurses, assistants) who left many elderly and disabled people behind in the hospitals where there was no access to power or clean water. In our class discussion that followed the viewing of the documentary, Asia kept referring to the Hippocratic Oath, which states that members of the medical profession will do everything ethical to preserve human life, except in the instance of "natural death."[30] In her response, she criticizes the decisions of the doctors and nurses to save themselves before attempting to preserve the lives of their patients. To this point, Asia seemed to revere those in the medical profession, but her response reveals that she has lost confidence in the very professionals who were previously inspirational.

In lines three (3) through eight (8), Asia writes, "I feel sad for the people who actually had to stay there and sit in the midst of the storm. I quickly put myself in their position…I can just feel how I would feel thinking about my family…" Asia expresses empathy for those victims of the storm. She puts herself in their positions and imagines the sights and sounds they experienced while riding out the storm and the horrific conditions they experienced for days after.

Finally, in lines nine (9) and ten (10), Asia discusses her thoughts about the potential breach of the levees. "Then it just adds on to hear about the whole levee situation 'cause I didn't even know about the dynamite and everything and that got me thinking…" Like Ron, Asia refers to the possibility that the government may have dynamited the levees following Hurricane Betsy in order to protect the homes of the wealthy. This portion of the documentary "adds on" to Asia's multitude of emotions, and although she does not specifically say that this information was astonishing, during the class discussion, she was

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[30]Hippocratic Oath, paragraph 3.

adamantly opposed the government's potential involvement in an action that would put the lives of the poor at risk.

In the final lines (11-12) of her response, Asia offers an astute political commentary when she says, "they can't sacrifice money to save more lives, but they'd sacrifice lives to save more money." Here, Asia refers to information presented by the documentary that the government knew that the levees could not withstand a hurricane of such force, but that they still did not reinforce these buttresses to protect the citizens. When she references "they," she means the United States government and the Army Corps of Engineers and the decision to use sandbags instead of rebuilding the levees to protect against storm surges. In this brief 12-lined response to the images she viewed in *When the Levees Broke*, Asia demonstrated that she felt empowered not only to criticize the medical profession and the government, but also to show compassion and empathy for a group of people with whom she could identify.

By providing students with a counter-text to the perspective in which they are accustomed to hearing (i.e. the White, hetero-sexual, middle-class values presented by most mainstream media outlets), they have a text by which to critique divergent messages. Because media that perpetuates the dominant value system is pervasive, students must learn to recognize how they are positioned in relation to these messages (Alvermann and Hagood, 2000; Kellner, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2005).

Though Ron and Asia do not demonstrate mastery of the dominant discourse here in their responses to *When the Levees Broke*, they begin to engage in critique of the dominant power structure, which demonstrates critical literacy development. Ron and Asia were not the only two students in the class who had responses that critiqued the dominant power structures; however, their responses were the most indicative of engagement in critical

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discourse. Furthermore, Tracie and I were pleased by student participation dialogue that was decidedly more critical than most of the whole-group discussions we had earlier in the semester.

Juxtaposing independent documentaries with mainstream media

In order to better explain the ways in which Tracie and I engaged her students in development of critical literacy, I return to the discussion of the practice of analyzing media as a text as I described in chapter two. Earlier, I presented a theoretical basis for including media texts in critical classrooms. As Alvermann and Hagood (2000) suggest, critical analysis of media (radio, TV, video, movies, CDs, the Internet, gang graffiti) can show students "how society and politics are structured and work to one's advantage or disadvantage" (p. 194). Engagement in this type of analysis can also challenge students to "actively produce meanings that then become part of the historical and social conditions in which future cultural texts are constituted" (p. 194). Providing students the opportunity to critique media texts and then to produce their own counter-texts are other pedagogical methods Tracie and I used to facilitate the advancement of critical literacy.

Recognizing the "Sugarcoat": Engaging students in critical media literacy

In the next section of this paper, I explain how Tracie and I engaged students in another assignment for the *When the Levees Broke* unit. In addition to challenging students to examine the images presented about Hurricane Katrina by the mainstream media, we also created opportunities for them to evaluate how those images contrasted with those presented in the documentary. Finally, we encouraged students to present their own images and critiques of mainstream media by writing three short plays that presented their perspectives of the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina.

Engaging in Critical Media Literacy

Building on the themes from the first day in the Katrina unit, Tracie and I developed a plan for the second lesson. When students came to class, they responded to the following prompt: "Given what you saw in the first 30 minutes of the documentary yesterday, think about some of the themes that were prevalent. What topics or themes do you think may be talked about in today in the documentary? Predict what you think you might see today." Once students discussed this with a partner, we made a list of the themes on the board.

Table 1

Themes/Topics:

Disenfranchisement	Depression	Need vs. Want
Racism	Equality	Prejudice
Social/Economic Status	Equity	Damage
Everlasting impact	History (cycles)	Foreign Obligations
Government vs. Citizens	Money vs. Status	

After this list was created, students discussed how the documentary explained how the economically disadvantaged and African American citizens of New Orleans had historically been slighted in order to benefit the wealthy. They focused on how this practice demonstrated prejudice and discrimination against those people who were not in the "money" or "status" positions. In analyzing my observation notes from class that day, I found it surprising that students wrote about the value placed on economic status and that regardless of skin color, the city did not privilege the needs of those living in poverty. My notes reveal that students recognized the cyclical nature of how the local government protected the wealthy class, and they stressed that they did not think this would change despite the experience of Katrina. Students went on to predict that they would see more inequality and devastation in the rest of Act I of the documentary.

Over the course of the week, we interweaved our discussions of themes with the images we viewed in the first two acts of the documentary. On the fourth day of the unit, after students came back from lunch, Tracie asked them to get into their project groups to "Classify the commonalities and differences between the people who have been interviewed in the documentary. Discuss who you think Spike Lee may have given the most attention to and explain why you think this?" After students brainstormed all of the people who were featured in the documentary, they began to categorize the people according to the commonalities and differences they noticed. When we came back together as a group, the students shared their classifications of the people: "activists," "government," "poor people," "victims," and "the wealthy."

After students offered their categorizations, we talked about how these groups were related to one another. One group explained that they thought, "The actors, residents, organizations blame the government, and the government blamed it on individual officials in New Orleans." Building on this analysis, another group suggested, "The government called for a mandatory evacuation, but didn't help those who couldn't do it, so the local government is actually set against the local people." Out of this dialogue, students began to suggest that "the people are against the mayor, but the mayor is against the government." Some suggested that several groups of people, like the "victims who were in the Superdome and on the streets," were positioned against the local and national government officials. All of the groups positioned the "people who needed help" against "the people who were supposed to help and didn't."

Students astutely positioned the people who could provide "first-hand accounts" and those "who were not there" critiqued the activists and media personalities who were

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interviewed for the documentary. They mentioned that these people did not necessarily have "credibility" because they were not actually there. This assessment of the people who are usually trusted as "authorities" by the majority of the American public demonstrated to Tracie and I that some of her students may have been developing critical literacy based on our prior engagements with media analysis.

Focusing on this critique, we continued our discussion of how certain mainstream media news channels presented the stories of the Hurricane Katrina victims differently. Students pointed out that they did not recall hearing about how horrible the situation was in New Orleans during the days after Hurricane Katrina. However, Spike Lee's documentary shows us how, for one of the first times in American history, the mainstream news media, like the conservative FOX news and the more liberal CNN, presented the harsh, candid images of the city and critiqued the lack of government response to the thousands of people stranded on bridges and in the convention center in New Orleans for days after Hurricane Katrina.[31] In fact, CNN news journalist Jack Cafferty (2006) presents evidence that many major newspapers, like the conservative New Hampshire *Union Leader*, critiqued George Bush's lack of reaction and response to such a disaster. We discussed how news media networks are often have a conservative (FOX News) or liberal (CNN) bias based on their corporate ownership.

When asked about their experiences with the news media, several students identified National Public Radio (NPR) as being a more liberal media outlet that their parents listened to occasionally. One student even commented that she had seen *Outfoxed*[32] a documentary made by Robert Greenwald (2004) that presents evidence that the Rupert Murdoch, owner of

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[31]"Hannity and Colmes." (2005).
[32]Greenwald, R. (2004). *Outfoxed.* Move-on.org.

Fox New Channel, uses the network to promote right-wing views. Satina, an African American Muslim female, explained to her classmates the argument made by the documentary, and students began to understand how all media has biases. In hindsight, we could have presented the students with several media clips and newspaper clippings and had them identify the social and political bias, but we did not think of that at the time.

The discussion of social and political bias presented in various forms of media was particularly relevant to the goals of critical literacy in a classroom with a majority minority group of students in that these students began to identify how the popular media was portraying certain groups of people with whom they identify. Spike Lee intertwined clips from the local Louisiana news footage, the major news networks like MSNBC, FOX News, and CNN, with his own interviews of people affected by the storm. A clip from the documentary that was particularly evocative was the response of a NAACP lawyer who pointed out that the media used words like "thugs" and "looters" as code for Black people. Evidence of the anger students felt upon hearing this language during the documentary was heard in their indistinct mumblings and sharp intakes of breath.

After hearing this revelation, all students were completely engaged in Act II of the documentary, which presents numerous examples of how the media and people involved with the aftermath of Katrina created stories that demonized the poor and Black citizens who were trapped in the city. The documentary presents the notorious story of how citizens of New Orleans were blocked from crossing the bridge into Jefferson Parish by police with shotguns. Negative racialized images were perpetuated by the chief of police who claimed that "babies were being raped" and that people were "shooting down helicopters carrying aid for the victims" (Lee, 2006, Act II). All of the images being shown on network television,

coupled with the stories being told by White 'officers of the peace' perpetuated racial

stereotypes, instilled fear in the White citizens who were not flooded out of their homes, and

encouraged a "shoot to kill" mentality.

In the classroom, all eyes were on the screen as Act II created a picture of racism and

dehumanization of American citizens. One comment from the documentary, in particular

resonated with the students when Calvin Mackie, Associate Professor of Mechanical

Engineering at Tulane University, remarks:

> How could it be that in a country that's supposedly the richest country in the world,
> where the 82nd Airborne are prepared to be anywhere in the world in a day and a
> half, where we were in the region of Sri Lanka when the Tsunami hit, in less than two
> days, and here we are, day four, day five and the federal government had still not
> made it to New Orleans?

Students distinctly remembered how quickly the US government provided aid to those

affected by the Tsunami that devastated Indonesia not quite a year before Katrina struck.

Although the event happened when they were in middle school, students recalled donating

their change in charity drives for the victims of the Tsunami. Footage from this section of

the documentary encouraged student comments about how they remembered how quickly the

US Red Cross was dispatched to the Asian nations affected by the natural disaster, and then

they began to ask why this was not the case in our own country during Katrina. They asked

us how this was possible. Kevin, a Black male asked, "Isn't this supposed to be the most

powerful country in the world? How could we send all that stuff to Asia and not take care of

our own?"

This section of the documentary also details how FEMA, managed by Michael

Brown, botched any attempts to meet even the most basic needs of the citizens of New

Orleans who were without clean drinking water, food, shelter, and safety

After watching the first two Acts of *When the Levees Broke*, students had already

begun to engage with the first three of the learning outcomes (APPENDIX V) we developed

for the lesson. Students were participating in the process of democratic dialogue about

controversial issues, like the government's treatment of poor citizens and people of color.

Using the documentary and first-hand accounts as historical documents, students discussed

the intersections of race and class and articulated judgments about where they stood based on

this evidence. Students also reacted to written text and visual media in order to better

understand the dynamics of Hurricane Katrina and the controversies that surrounded the

disaster. Furthermore, field notes reveal that students had visceral reactions to the images on

the screen, which suggests they may have begun to feel for empathy the victims of Hurricane

Katrina. As Tracie and I had hoped, students expressed interest in using their new

knowledge and skills to get involved in their communities to improve the common good.

Tracie and I endeavored to engage students in conversations and assignments that

might lead them to becoming more involved in the local community. We essentially wanted

them to take action and brainstorm how they could inform citizens in their local community

about the lessons they learned through viewing the documentary and subsequent research on

their areas of interest.

Engaging Students in Social Action

The students' interests and concerns organically led to the next part of the Hurricane

Katrina unit, which sought to engage them in developing their own response to Katrina and

to encourage them to participate in bringing that message to their community. As a class, we

discussed the possible ways in which we could bring our interpretations about Hurricane

Katrina to the local community. Students discussed writing children's books for elementary

students and suggested that they write a play to be performed for their peers; however, because of time constraints and upcoming exams, we decided to write three individual plays, and the students wanted to present them to the community. These three plays were based on the three main themes students determined were the focus of *When the Levees Broke*.

Teachers who use critical literacy not only introduce supplementary texts and provide multiple perspectives (Behrman, 2006), but they often also provide opportunities for students to produce countertexts (Behrman, 2006; Morrell, 2008) and participate in student-choice research projects (Behrman, 2006), which may lead to social action (Kretovics, 1985). Tracie developed a unit that she hoped would involve students in the production of their own countertexts based on topics that interested them. Using the documentary as a model, students developed groups to research and create plays based on the themes they noticed in the documentary—the three groups included information on challenging the messages in the popular media, how the United States government responded to citizens during and after Hurricane Katrina, and the lasting effects Hurricane Katrina had on New Orleans and the country. The next section of this paper discusses how Tracie and I attempted to engage students in critical reflection about media and production of their own texts.

Student groups were created based on their interest in the themes from our brainstorming session (see Table 1, p. 134). After students chose their topics, we had a conversation about how this project would commence. Tracie was absent from school on this day; thus, I prepared a lesson for the class and led students in discussion. The students and I developed a set of goals for the individual groups to use to guide the writing process. The students decided that at the end of their short productions, their audience would be able to:

- Be aware of the actual events surrounding Hurricane Katrina and the government's response to the citizens of New Orleans;
- Discuss how Hurricane Katrina affected different groups of people and how the media portrayed those groups;
- Identify areas of the government in which we need improvement;
- Show how government, in some cases, still has not changed their response to certain groups; and
- Discuss the government's responsibility to its citizens and how these responsibilities are upheld.

One African American female student moderated the class discussion, and after some debate, the groups decided to write three separate one act plays as opposed to each group writing one act of one large production. Over the course of the next eight days, Tracie and I facilitated as students conducted research (using the mobile laptop station) about their group topics. We suggested government and news Internet sources (APPENDIX V) for them to use while conducting research. For example, Asia explained that her all female, mixed race group (The Aftermath) "researched lawsuits and problems associated with post-Katrina" and that they were now "searching for more information about the FEMA trailers." She took on a leadership role in this group, overseeing the writing of the script, researching the facts about FEMA debit cards and other forms of assistance, and organizing the responsibilities of all group members. Asia explained that she had viewed resources that we recommended for her group as well as the websites of reputable newspapers like *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *The New York Times* to collect information about how the debit cards were distributed and monitored and the current controversies surrounding the temporary trailers that were given to the victims. The other group members were developing props they would need for each scene and how they would transition between scenes.

Similarly, Ron led his group by writing the script and keeping his them on track while they practiced their lines. All four of the males in the class were in this group along with

four Black females. They worked well together crafting a play that focused on the experiences of a fictitious teenage female and her grandmother. While telling the story of this family, the group demonstrated their interpretation of the government's reaction to the catastrophe. This group also wanted to include music that contained messages about Hurricane Katrina as the soundtrack to their Act.

A third group of students, all females, developed their ideas about how to critique media messages concerning events like Katrina. Tracie and I assisted this group in developing questions they could ask members of their "media panel" during a conference on "Women in the Media." This group intended to demonstrate how all messages from media outlets contained biases.

Katrina, Through the Eyes of Teenagers

On the day the final plays were to be presented, I arrived at Crosstown at 7:30 in the morning. Students had invited family members and close family friends to see their plays. Huang, the only Asian male in the class, had brought his video camera to tape all of the plays. He explained that he planned to burn a DVD copy of the footage for both Tracie and me.

Prior to the presentations of the plays, Tracie welcomed guests and introduced the project. Tracie explained to the guests that this presentation was the culminating project of a unit on media literacy that analyzed, "how we view media in the world." She explained that by watching *When the Levees Broke* and discussing the documentary, students learned "how the media constructs different images" and "how they interpreted those images and how they can make their own assumptions and make their own opinions." Then, Tracie explained the

focus of each group and gave parents a copy of the rubric she used to assess their performance (see APPENDIX V).

In this section, I describe the content of two of the plays and analyze how these students provide critiques of media and government response.

Media, Politics, and Katrina

The first group to present their play focused on media portrayals of Katrina. The young women in this group wrote a play that depicted four professional women attending a conference titled, "Media, Politics, and Katrina." The characters include Isis, a documentary film maker who was mentored by Spike Lee; Alanna, a Neo-Soul singer who has dedicated her most recent album to the victims of Hurricane Katrina; Jenee, a former *New York Times* reporter who is now a correspondent in Iraq; and Layla, a *60 Minutes* news media journalist. The characters are introduced to each other and the audience in the opening scene which is set in a hotel room. Their reservations have been mixed up, and all the women are now sharing a room.

In the second scene of the play, the characters discuss their topics for the seminar, which has been scheduled a short time after Hurricane Katrina. The following section introduces these characters and their perspectives.

> **Alanna:** "I had planned to do a short seminar about what was appearing on TV about the hurricane, but after hearing some of the victims' perspectives, I'm not sure about whether what I heard was the truth or not."

> **Layla** responds: I know exactly what you mean. As soon as I heard about the devastating situation, I felt it was my civic duty to go down and help with the recovery process. When I came back to broadcast the situation, I realized the rumors and misinterpretations of information were the main reason people were not going back to New Orleans to help the victims.

> **Isis:** I know, it was really devastating. I just recently started planning for my documentary about Katrina, and from all the victims I have interviewed so far, I could

tell that all the information that they were presenting on t.v. was complete crap. It's a shame we have to rely on what the people are saying, but in the end, we do not know if what they are saying is the truth or if they are trying to protect their reputations.

Jenee: Well, I went to Louisiana so that I could get the actual facts for one of my assignments. My head editor told me to "sugarcoat" it, what I saw so that I didn't worry the public. And I didn't think nothing of it because sometimes all the details can scare our readers. When I got down there, I couldn't do that…I mean it was crazy. They were calling the victims refugees and everything. I told my boss and he was like, I shouldn't tell the whole story. I almost quit my job.

Alanna: The media is so screwed up these days. Being women who are so powerful in this industry, I think we really need to do something about it. We can't wait and see what the media is portraying, we have to go and report for ourselves about what we really saw.

These young women make astute critiques of the media and suggest that all media is biased; however, they do not take into account that their suggestions that they can "report what we really saw" may be biased as well. By pointing out the "misinterpretations of information," and the biased nature of naming the hurricane victims as "refugees," Layla and Jenee suggest that the media did not have any first hand knowledge to explain what was going on, and that they were treating the citizens of New Orleans as if they were people who were fleeing persecution in their own country. By making this critique, they are pointing out that the media did not necessarily have access to the people who were trapped in the city, and therefore, could not provide first-hand accounts of the events.

Although these students introduce the idea that media is partial to its target demographic, they do not provide an analysis of who determines what messages are presented to the public or whose ideas are privileged. Thus, I argue, that although they were beginning to critique the media, these students had not yet begun to master the dominant Discourse in a way that led to their empowerment or disrupted the hierarchies within society.

In the next scene, all the characters are sitting in a row at the front of the class as if they are participating in a panel discussion at the conference with two discussants who narrate the scene and ask questions. The panel discussants ask the first question, "Whose stories and pictures aren't told in the media (surrounding Hurricane Katrina)?"

> **Layla:** I've found that looking at the media, there are certain stations that broadcast to a certain demographic, so they're not going to tell exactly what the truth is, they try to slant what the truth is kind of to protect the public, but often times you are not protecting the public. You are giving them the wrong idea of what's happening, and there were messages on the news about them…about in New Orleans about people being violent and that they were looting and everything but they never looked at the fact that people were taking food and taking clothes and things that they needed because they were left in New Orleans for days…

Although the play continues with a bit more commentary, Layla's critique resonates with a similar analysis made by critical media scholar Doug Kellner (2007). Kellner (2007) explains that Hurricane Katrina "exhibited one of the most astonishing media spectacles in US history" because the media "put on display the glaring inequities of race and class that define the United States in the new millennium" (p. 223). In a critique similar to "Layla's" analysis of the news media, Kellner (2007) recalls that, "readers of Yahoo news recognized that racism was blatantly obvious in captions in two pictures circulating, one of Whites wading through water and described as 'carrying food' and the other of Blacks with armloads of food described as 'looters'" (p. 226).

These students' responses were depictions of how the media *usually* presents the stories. The young women in this group were able to make a statement about how this happens because we gave them access to the documentary which provides actual footage from the news networks that attempted to show the images and tell the stories with legitimacy. For example, in the documentary, there is an entire segment dedicated to the detailed reports and interviews conducted by CNN reporter Soledad O'Brien, who is of

Australian and Afro-Cuban decent. Spike Lee effectively uses footage from O'Brien's reports following Katrina, where she grills Michael Brown and heatedly questions how the news media could get into the city before relief workers were on the scene. The students also had access to the other reports from White reporters who presented similar anecdotes and asked questions comparable to O'Brien's. While these students were preparing their play, Tracie and I encouraged them to examine the differences between the mainstream media and documentaries and discuss why each media outlet may develop stories to engage a certain demographic.

Although the students did not fully engage with a critical examination of the mass media, Layla is able to make a social commentary and position herself as a Black female who opposes the messages the media sends about people with whom she can identify. Layla's ability to do this resonates with the goals of critical media literacy (Kellner, 2007; Morrell, 2008) in that she is providing a counter narrative to the messages she has received from media outlets and she has taken a stand against those messages.

In the next scene, the discussant asks, "Do pictures tell everything?"

Alanna: We have to believe pictures when we don't have first hand accounts of what is going on. We must question the message behind those pictures though…images attract a person's attention and elicit emotion and provide first-hand accounts when people can't be there.

By commenting on the importance of asking questions about the manner in which and why pictures/images are produced, Alanna demonstrates her understanding of why we need to engage in development of critical media literacy. Though her answer to the discussant's question is brief, she explains that images are used to position the viewer to make a judgment about that depiction of the event. Moreover, Alanna suggests that pictures often allow a person to develop their own opinions based on the primary document. By insinuating that

the person "reading" a "text" (in this case viewing a picture) has the power to interpret that text without having to be told what it means, Alanna begins to participate in the dominant Discourse of power relations (Gee 1990).

Finally, the panel was asked a question about the stereotypes that were perpetuated by in the media about the people affected by Katrina.

> **Layla:** Refugees and thugs…they were talking about Blacks as thugs. Black people, not white people, are characterized as thugs. White people are just hungry and needy, but they aren't thugs. When people don't challenge the media, images and stereotypes are reinforced.

Layla makes an excellent point here, once again suggesting that the media uses certain words when describing other ethnicities that they may not use to describe Black people. Again, they make the same critique of the media that Kellner (2007) makes in an article analyzing the spectacle created by the media during Hurricane Katrina. This group appears to have begun the process of developing critical media literacy through their juxtaposition of *When the Levees Broke* and the mainstream media.

Government and Policy

After the "Media" group presented their play, the "Government and Policy" group set up their props and prepared to present their play. This play presents both the perspectives of citizens faced with evacuation due to Hurricane Katrina and President Bush's reaction to several events surrounding the natural disaster. As this play was rather long, I only present portions.

The first scene begins with a presidential advisor rushing into the office of "President Bush," who is playing video games. Although the advisor anxiously explains that if Hurricane Katrina makes landfall, "it could take out the southern coastal regions," the President only asks for a sandwich and continues to play his game.

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The audience laughed at the political satire presented by the students. In their own way, these students critiqued the Bush administration's response to the victims of Hurricane Katrina by developing a character that plays video games and asks for a ham sandwich as the storm bears down on New Orleans. Silmilarly, Kellner (2007) writes that the day after Katrina made landfall, Bush was at a fundraiser in San Diego, California "smiling and strumming a guitar and again bragging about Iraq and touting his failed domestic policies…"(p. 223). Like Kellner's discussion of the spectacle of how the President responded to the American media and criticism of the messages produced for the public, these students condemn the President's reaction and make a social commentary through their play.

The subsequent scene is set in New Orleans, home of a young girl named Katrina and her mother, Betsy, who are getting ready to celebrate Betsy's birthday. As the Katrina prepares her mother's birthday dinner, they hear warning on the radio that Hurricane Katrina has been upgraded to a Category 5.

> **Betsy:** Girl, that ain't nothing to worry about that hurricane being a Category 5 and stuff, and making landfall.
>
> **Katrina:** You don't think we should leave?
>
> **Betsy:** Nah, baby, we get them all the time.

Representatives from Mayor Nagin's office enter the scene and explain that there is a "Mandatory Evacuation" in effect, and that all residents are "expected to leave the area."

> **Katrina:** But what we don't have a car. How are we supposed to get there?
>
> **Nagin Representative:** I don't have any information about that.
>
> **Nagin Representative 2:** Find a ride because you need to get to the Superdome quick. Oh, and it's going to be a big one, so you better get away as quick as you can.

After the representatives from the mayor's office leave, Katrina returns to her mother.

>**Betsy:** So, are we staying then?

>**Katrina:** No, we have to get to the Superdome.

After a bit of arguing over whether or not they will evacuate their home in the Lower Ninth Ward, the scene ends with Katrina running off to pack and Betsy sitting in her chair, rolling her eyes. This scene presents the students' savvy understanding of literary irony. The name Katrina obviously is representative of the 2005 hurricane, but Betsy is a reference to the 1965 hurricane that ripped through the Gulf Coast causing the massive flooding of Lake Pontchartrain almost 40 years prior to Hurricane Katrina. According to *USA Today* (Williams, 2003), the destruction caused by Hurricane Betsy prompted the creation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Hurricane Protection Program, which was charged with improving the levees.

Students conducted research about the connections between Hurricane Betsy and Hurricane Katrina beyond what they learned in *When the Levees Broke* so that they could present this information to the audience. Engagement in research that reveals problems within society and how the conditions within society create these problems is a common practice in classrooms that focus on critical literacy development (Behrman, 2006) As mentioned earlier, urban legend maintains that the levees were intentionally breached during Hurricane Betsy in order to save the wealthy houses on higher ground from flooding. When students were writing this play and developing the characters, I asked about the significance of their choices for character names. They explained that they wanted to make a point about the similarities of the two hurricanes that caused "death and devastation to the poor people of New Orleans."

The next scene of the play portrays a conversation between New Orleans Mayor Ray

Nagin and Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco as they discuss a plan for their city as

Katrina bears down on much of the coastline.

 Mayor Nagin: We need to prepare for Katrina.

 Governor Blanco: I have already contacted the Bush Administration.

 Mayor Nagin: Did you get a response?

 Governor Blanco: No

 Mayor Nagin: Well, we need to contact FEMA, DHS (Department of Homeland
 Security)…Hell, we need to contact all the organizations…this is going to be a mess
 for the next few weeks. (He reaches for a phone.)

When Mayor Nagin and Governor Blanco attempt to contact President Bush, they are

told, "He has his phone off right now, it's McCain's 69th birthday." Mayor Nagin slams his

phone closed and Governor Blanco gets an update from the National Weather Service that

the storm is almost on top of them. The scene ends.

 Returning to the storyline of Katrina and her grandmother, the students show the

pain and suffering of the citizens at the Superdome. The two characters cry over the loss of

their home, all their pictures, and possessions. As Katrina watches her mother suffer from

exhaustion and dehydration, she is told that Bush has heard about the situation at the

Superdome and that FEMA is on the way to help.

 Katrina: I just heard the people are coming to help…It's ok, Ma, we are going to go
 home, rebuild the house, it's going to be more beautiful than anything there is. Then,
 we'll invite the whole family over for Thanksgiving Ma. It's going to be perfect!
 Help! My mom needs water…somebody help.

 FEMA Rep.: I'm sorry, we don't have anymore supplies. We are just getting into
 the city so…

 Katrina: What do you mean? You're FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management
 Agency.

FEMA Rep.: Don't worry, Bush just heard, he's on his way.

Katrina: Bush just heard; this happened three days ago!

Then, as her mother Betsy dies, she explains, "Help is coming. The government is coming, just like they went to help the people of Indonesia." Finally, the play returns to the subject of President Bush's response to the victims of Hurricane Katrina; he praises speaks with the city and state officials and praises them for getting everything under control.

Bush: It looks like you and FEMA are managing the situation.

Official: Yes, I think we have everything under control.

Bush: The supplies have been placed throughout the city…I'm very satisfied.

Mayor Nagin: What? What are you talking about? Do you see that? Nothing is under control.

Bush: Governor Blanco, thanks to your decision making…(inaudible)

Governor Blanco: Yes, it was your leadership that enabled me to do this.

Katrina: Leadership? My mom died because of this.

Governor Blanco: Well, she must have been very elderly.

Bush: Yes, must have been natural causes.

Aid: How can you be so cold-hearted? What's wrong with you? All you care about is money?

Bush: No, that's wrong. I love the country and all my fellow people. Lives are the first priority.

The Aid character divulges that Bush was playing computer games when Hurricane Katrina hit, and then he quits. Katrina screams at Bush that he "never did care." The play concludes with the Katrina character challenging everyone in the class to think about the

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many people who died because of the hurricane and she asks for a moment of silence in remembrance.

These students created a well-constructed critique of the nuances of the Bush administration's reaction. In a manner very similar to Kellner's (2007) criticism of Bush's response to Hurricane Katrina, the students developed a play that not only expressed their interpretations of the events, but also incorporated historical facts and captured the emotional reaction of the citizens of New Orleans. Additionally, by having Bush praise the outcomes of his own directives while a citizen cries because her mother has died, the students demonstrate their disgust with how the government handled the entire situation. Like the group before them, these students also demonstrated that they had begun to engage in discourse critiquing how decisions are made in society based on political agendas and social hierarchies (Giroux, 1985). Although their main objective appeared to be bashing President Bush, they presented a well-planned counter-text (Behrman, 2006) of their understanding of Hurricane Katrina.

Conclusions

Early in the spring semester, Tracie and I made a few unsuccessful attempts to implement pedagogy and curricula to foster the development of critical literacy. However, as the semester continued, we began to engage students in dialogue and activities that encouraged critical dialogue about the relationship between knowledge and power. There were moments throughout the units on *A Raisin in the Sun* and *When the Levees Broke* where students engaged in mastering the dominant Discourse through examination of how "knowledge serves very specific economic, political and social interests" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1995, p. 132). Although not all lessons were saturated with activities that improved

students' critical literacy skills, Tracie and I felt that we gave students the necessary tools to evaluate their own participation in a society that is filled with power and dominance.

As mentioned in the literature review of this dissertation, Glenda McGregor (2000) proposes that before a teacher can implement critical literacy, the teacher must recognize that reading is a social practice that engages people in a struggle with texts over ideology and discourse. McGregor also contends that development of critical literacy can "enable students to question and refute the given order of things, and it especially encourages them to dispute normalizing practices that define their identities and implicitly allot them a position on the grid of power relations within particular sites and ultimately within their own society" (p. 222). Though the students in Tracie's 2nd period AP Language and Composition class may not have completely acquired the skills and meta-language for analyzing textual codes and positioning themselves within particular political, economic, and social spaces, they walked away from class on that last day of school with a greater awareness of how we are all implicated in a larger society replete with the perpetuation of dominant ideologies.

In the next chapter, I examine how, in some instances, Tracie and I implemented pedagogy and curricula that fosters the development of critical literacy, and I explain more specifically how we could have been more successful in our endeavors. I also discuss how we were able to improve our practice over time and became less traditional in order to engage in more activities that facilitated the development of critical literacy.

CHAPTER 6

"It's a New Day":

Toward the Development of Support Beyond the Teacher Education Program

This study examined the experiences one first-year high school English teacher, twenty-three of her second period students, and myself as mentor/co-teacher, all of whom participated in a curriculum and pedagogy that supported the development of critical literacy. The primary purpose in conducting this research was to develop a better understanding of how teachers develop and implement curriculum that facilitates the improvement of critical literacy skills. The research experience also provided an opportunity to collaborate with a first year teacher, thus enabling me to better understand how novice educators make sense of and apply the theories discussed in teacher preparation programs once they enter the field.

This chapter offers a concrete depiction of what critical literacy praxis might look like in secondary English classrooms. I consider how this research aligns with current national standards for literacy education and provides a model for how teacher preparation programs may be able to bridge the gap between theory and practice for novice educators by providing support into their first year of teaching. In a standards-driven educational system, there are perhaps few campaigns to evaluate mastery of critical literacy skills on a standards-based exam; however, this does not mean teacher preparation programs should not introduce critical pedagogy into the curriculum.

In this final chapter of this dissertation I discuss the general findings of the study and explore the implications of this study in developing classroom spaces where critical literacy

education is the focus, bridging the gap between theory and practice in teacher preparation programs, and proposing new directions for research that can build upon research presented here and by other scholars concerned with empowering urban students with critical literacy skills.

General Findings

Though there have been several texts (Morgan, 1997; Ramirez & Gallardo, 2001; Stevens & Bean, 2007) written by university professors concerned with the development of critical literacy in language arts classrooms, few have concentrated on the possible benefits of using curriculum, pedagogy, and activities to facilitate critical literacy skills in the high school English classroom with minority youth (Carlson, 1993; Mahiri, 1998; Morrell, 2008). The research conducted in this study adds to both the field of study on critical literacy in the secondary English language arts classroom and the development of critical literacy with minority students. Based on the data collected in this study, I contend that the students in Tracie's second period English course became noticeably more cogent and sophisticated both in their written assignments and in their analyses of media texts through the use of a pedagogy and curriculum that supported critical literacy development.

Although Tracie's practice maintained a traditional pedagogy that resembled the banking model of education (Freire, 1970) most of the time, with my support, she was able to take risks by occasionally implementing lessons that had elements of critical literacy.

Implications for Developing Critical Literacy in English Classrooms

In this section, I provide a framework for how high school English teachers interested in facilitating the development of critical literacy can create an environment where this type of literacy is supported. I propose that classrooms concerned with the improvement of

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critical literacy must include six components: development of primary and secondary discourses (Gee, 1990); inclusion of multicultural texts in acquisition of secondary discourses (Delpit, 1992); a strong foundation of critical reading (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985); writing instruction that includes a dialogical and analytical component (Morgan, 1997), analysis of media texts (Morrell, 2008), and engagement in social activism. These six elements are described more completely in the following section.

Development of primary and secondary Discourses

Critical literacy educators must value the primary Discourses of minority students in order to facilitate the development of secondary Discourses, which is paramount to becoming critically literate. As mentioned in the literature review, Discourses as defined by Gee (1990) are "ways of displaying (through words, actions, values, and beliefs) membership in a particular social group or social network" (p. 128)

I argue that much of Tracie's success with the implementation of pedagogy that facilitates critical literacy with her students is due, in part, to the fact that she had a shared cultural background that enabled her to use their primary Discourse in the acquisition of secondary Discourses. As mentioned in my description of Tracie's development of community with her students, Tracie grew up in a middle-class Black family, which is a similar experience to the majority of the students in her class. Because Tracie was able to converse with students using a discourse that was very similar to their own primary Discourse learned in the home, she was able to communicate with her Black students and students from working-class backgrounds in a manner that is less feasible with teachers who do not share similar socio-cultural backgrounds with their students. I was also able to

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communicate with these students based on my own experience growing up in a working-class family and exposure to people from various cultural backgrounds.

Using the primary Discourses of the students, Tracie and I were able to engage them in critical examination of an extremely controversial events in US history (Civil Rights Movement and Hurricane Katrina) through careful selection of curriculum materials and texts that represented the perspectives of people who have similar backgrounds to them. By encouraging students to critique media texts by using their primary Discourses, we were able to engage them in the acquisition of a secondary Discourse similar to that of social critical theorists. I argue that students began to develop these secondary Discourses specifically because of the way Tracie and I designed activities and discussions from the unit on the *When the Levees Broke*. The critical literacy classroom *must* value the primary Discourses of students in order to develop mastery of secondary Discourses that are characteristic of students who are critically literate.

Multicultural texts and acquisition of secondary discourses

Students in classrooms that promote the development of critical literacy also need to be exposed to curriculum relevant to their multicultural backgrounds. As described earlier, Delpit (1992) writes of the importance of teaching students how to navigate between multiple discourses and suggests that students of color often fail to participate and invest in education because the material and pedagogical practices do not take their culture and interests into account. Teachers must demonstrate to students how to engage in multiple Discourses in order to make the switch between contexts.

Tracie's consistent introduction of literature written by authors of various backgrounds exemplifies Delpit's (1992) suggestion that teachers who privilege student

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culture and interests empower children to critique standards and norms based on their personal experiences. Not only did Tracie offer her students the opportunity to select texts by authors of multicultural backgrounds, but she also challenged students to produce texts about their own multicultural experiences. Tracie demonstrated that she valued her students' personal triumphs and challenges and created a space where they could examine how the events in their lives influenced their perspectives.

As mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation, multicultural education provides "equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups" (Banks and Banks, 1995, p. xi). In the multicultural classroom that facilitates the development of critical literacy, the teacher acts as a guide who engages students in discussion and description of feelings on topics such as culture, immigration, sexism, stereotypes, and all forms of prejudice. In the secondary English classroom that promotes critical literacy development, students must have the opportunity to acquire secondary Discourses through the inclusion of curriculum and pedagogy that privileges their primary Discourses, which must be representative of their varied cultural experiences.

Although Tracie may not have mastered this practice in her first year of teaching, she was able to begin the process of selecting multi-cultural texts and planning lessons that foster the development of critical literacy.

Reading instruction in critical literacy classrooms

Tracie and I should have focused more on this reflective manner of reading during the implementation of the literature circle unit. Though we encouraged students to choose from a list of texts written by authors of multicultural backgrounds; we could have done much more to promote the development of critical literacy. In order for students to have improved

their skills of analysis in relation to the messages of power and oppression presented by these texts, there needed to be some form of dialogical and evaluative component to the activities.

Tracie and I might have challenged students to learn more about the contexts in which the novels were written or to research the backgrounds and experiences of the authors. We should have enabled students to answer questions that asked for whom was the text written, for what purpose, and who benefits from the message? In my conversations with reading groups, I gave them insight into the context in which most of the texts were written, but I could have challenged students to evaluate what this information may have meant for the development of these texts and the positioning of them as readers.

This work has strong implications for reading instruction in critical literacy classrooms. Teachers who generate curriculum and develop their methodologies around the goals of critical reading create multiple opportunities for students to examine how power structures shape both texts and their evaluations of text.

Writing and the development of critical literacy

Though I would not characterize all of Tracie's writing assignments as working toward the development of critical literacy, several prompts from the writing portfolios she had students create had possible implications for the critical literacy classroom. Students independently planned, wrote, edited, and submitted four pieces of writing from six topics, which included an autobiography, an original fictional short story, an essay analyzing the rhetorical strategies used by John F. Kennedy in his inaugural speech, two self-selected AP prompts, and a reflection letter. Tracie and I could have fostered development of critical literacy by engaging students in discussion of their autobiographies and critical reflection of how they came to include particular instances that shaped their lives. By just taking this

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assignment two steps further (discussion and analysis), Tracie and I might have offered

students the opportunity to realize that they constructed their self-identity based on the

influences of their homes and society.

Tracie and I could have also altered the critique of Kennedy's inaugural speech to

include an analysis of the messages of power present in the text. As Shor (1999) mentions,

in order to develop critical literacy, students must examine the role of power in political

messages. By evaluating how Kennedy addresses certain members of society, but excludes

those people who do not share the experiences or values represented by the goals of his

administration, students might be equipped with a skills that would allow them to consider

how political messages often have the interest of the mainstream society in mind. Being able

to recognize the messages of power in political speeches is indicative of becoming critically

literate.

The work of Morgan (1997) and Shor (1999) provide implications for the

development of writing curriculum in a critical classroom. In addition to challenging

students to write their stories and analyze the messages of power in other people's writing,

there must be a dialogical aspect to the course. Students must learn to discuss the messages

in order to become aware of how these texts are constructed based on cultural and social

values.

Analysis and production of media texts

Critical literacy educators may engage students in the critical analysis of texts, but

without actually encouraging the production and distribution of new texts, these teachers are

not truly emphasizing the generative nature of critical literacy. About three days after the

end of the school year, I received an email from Huang, the Asian male in Tracie's class who

rarely participated in whole class discussions. Huang had videotaped the play presentations and had made copies of his work for both Tracie and I. Huang emailed me to let me know that he had also uploaded all of the plays to YouTube. When I followed Huang's link to the videos, I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by the way he had edited each short video and had digitally added the group's names and the members of each group to the beginning of each clip. Now, the students, their peers, families, and anyone else who searches the term "Katrina plays" can access the videos and watch the students' brief dramas. By 'publishing' his work to the Internet, Huang legitimized the students' voices and viewpoints on Hurricane Katrina, which was a major controversial event in American history.

At the beginning of this unit, her goal was for students to bring the message of Katrina to their community, and although it did not technically happen as part of her classroom instruction, her ultimate goal for the unit was met when Huang made videos public. Critical literacy educators can encourage students to find spaces to legitimize their voices and perspectives in the public arena. Youtube is just one example of an outlet where students can distribute their messages in society. Critical literacy classrooms must not only be spaces where students produce their own texts, but teachers in these classrooms are charged with finding outlets for the public sharing of these messages.

Engagement in Social Activism

Once students learn they can analyze the inequities that exist in schooling and society, they may decide to engage in social action in order to transform the structures that perpetuate the injustices. There is most often an activist component to critical literacy education, where the teacher serves as the facilitator of social change. In several instances, Tracie and I led students in discussions about the major issues and challenges they faced on a daily basis.

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Lisa Delpit (1992) also suggests that with the activist potential in critical literacy education, students will learn how to envision the world in the way that all people have access and opportunity. Critical literacy education acknowledges the unfair privileging of certain dominant Discourses in which society engages. By challenging students to participate in conversations about the injustices of privileging one group or ideal over another because of skin color or socio-economic status, teachers can help to empower students and create opportunities for them to find their voices. By developing lessons based on dialogue with students about their needs and interests, we enabled students to take part in a larger community conversation that attempts to solve problems and create alternatives to oppressive situations and practices.

When students invited their parents, school personnel, and friends to view their Hurricane Katrina plays, they took it upon themselves to take their message to the community. Though only done on a small scale, the students in B24 presented their resistant messages about the injustices of privileging one group or ideal over another because of skin color or socio-economic status. They challenged the dominant Discourse of social hierarchies that dictates who obtains resources in this country every day. This project engaged students in social activism.

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

In my discussions with Tracie about her memories of the theories she learned in her formal teacher education courses, I deduced that Tracie had an understanding of critical pedagogy and critical literacy, but without actually witnessing these theories in practice, she was unable to make the connections between her own practice and these theories. Although student teachers participate in student teaching internships, they may not be paired with

critical pedagogues who can demonstrate how to implement emancipatory pedagogy. This realization led me to think more about how teachers like Tracie enter their first years of teaching with the professional and theoretical knowledge to survive, but not necessarily the examples by which to develop critical pedagogy.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this study is that there may be a need for teacher education programs to focus on critical literacy when preparing pre-service educators to enter urban schools. However, until there is opportunity for praxis, pre-service educators may not be able to make the connections between formal theory and classroom practice. I propose that teacher education faculty maintain relationships with graduates who remain in the areas surrounding the universities. Eventually, the production of teachers who have this critical perspective on education, will create spaces where pre-service educators can witness the development of critical literacy in actual classrooms.

Need for Mentors and Collaboration

This research may also add to the body of research on the collaboration between university faculty and novice teachers. Teacher education professors Dwight Rogers and Leslie Babinski (2002) began "New Teacher Groups" in 1995 as an attempt to guide and support novice teachers in problem solving scenarios and discussions. These groups, composed of five or six first-year teachers and two co-facilitators met every other week to discuss issues and problems they were facing as new faculty. This text, like several others (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Florio-Ruane, 2001) discusses the possibilities for creating structured opportunities for supporting new teachers into their induction phase, but does not address the possible role of the university instructor mentoring new teachers in their first year.

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Although there have been articles and texts that discuss the role of the instructor in the preparation of pre-service and lateral entry teachers and the role of veteran teachers mentoring first-year teachers, I have yet to uncover an example similar to Tracie's and my relationship. Though we initially intended to maintain the roles of mentor/protégé, circumstances (serendipitous) led us into this collaboration. I preserved my role as a teaching mentor in the traditional sense (as mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation) throughout the fall semester, but when circumstances changed in the spring, Tracie began to take on the role of advisor. I became dependent on her vision for implementation of her plans, and we often co-taught lessons unrelated to our collaborative research on critical literacy. By the end of the semester, Tracie and I were not only teaching together, but we also collaboratively developed rubrics for student assessment, and we worked together to grade final projects.

Tracie and I both designed the lessons for engaging students in the acquisition of critical literacy, and we both had the opportunity to execute these lessons. Students begin to look to us both to answer their questions, and when Tracie would teach about writing from the front of the classroom, she would often look to me at the back of the classroom and say, "Do you have any examples or anything to add Heather?" The shifting nature of our roles not only allowed me the opportunity to participate in teaching for critical literacy development, but it also encouraged Tracie to design her own lessons and observe my implementation of these lessons that included elements of critical pedagogy. In observing my execution of her lessons, Tracie was able to witness how a veteran teacher would implement a pedagogy that supports critical literacy, while I was actually able to become more aware of the issues new teachers are facing in modern schools. This partnership was

not only beneficial for Tracie, but it also provided me to opportunity to return to a teaching role in a public school, which I had not done in almost four years. Teacher educators rarely return to the classroom in the teaching role once they earn their doctorate degrees.

In addition to the opportunity to learn from each other, this experience also allowed Tracie and I to collaborate on a professional development level. In the spring semester, Tracie and I submitted a proposal for a presentation about our co-teaching experience at the National Council for Teachers of English Annual Conference. Our research project was selected, and we were invited to present at the conference. Tracie was unable to attend the conference because she had just given birth to her first child; however, I presented portions of this dissertation to a group of teacher educators who appeared to be interested in the dynamic of our relationship. Therefore, based on this experience, I argue that collaborations between university instructors and first-year teachers can also introduce these novice educators to issues related to professional development. Not only were we able to collaboratively author a proposal for submission to this national conference, but we often talked about the most current research in the field (i.e. Morrell's new book on critical literacy and new young adult novels). New teachers who are not assigned a mentor in their content area may not have access to or opportunities to discuss research in their subject areas.

Reform-minded Teaching

The relationship that Tracie and I formed is not representative of the typical composite of a veteran teaching mentor and a novice teacher. Our relationship more closely resembles a co-teaching scenario in that we collaborated closely on designing curricula and pedagogy that would support Tracie's students when taught by either her or myself. However, because my doctoral studies focus more on transformative education (see

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APPENDIX I), I was able to bridge the gap between theory and practice of educational

reform for Tracie. Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1991) recommends that novice teachers need

models for developing reform-minded teaching, which can assist in the development of a

more critical approach to curricula. Furthermore, Lee Shulman (1986) suggests that mentors

can demonstrate how to alter subject knowledge and practice to connect with students from a

variety of backgrounds and learning abilities. By engaging novice teachers in reflection

about how they teach, mentor teachers can assist and support transformative educational

practices.

Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) stress the need for more research in the area of

"what kind of mentoring makes what sort of difference for new teachers and their students

and under what circumstances such differences are most likely to occur" (p. 680). Norman

and Feiman-Nemser (2005) also suggest that the influence mentoring has on a novice teacher

also depends on "appropriate matches, time, and training" (p. 680) as well as what

expectations both the mentor and the novice teacher have for each other. The model

provided by our relationship begins to answer these questions, in that we both had to think

carefully about what our roles meant to each other and to the students. Typically, in this

mentor/protégé relationship, new teachers do not have to consider how another teacher will

influence the learning outcomes in the classroom. However, in this case, Tracie was

challenged to reflect on how her curricular decisions and instructional design would benefit

her students when carried out by me.

In a sense, I acted as what Sandholtz and Finan (1998) call a "boundary spanner" (p.

24), which are people who work both in the schools and hold a position in the university. By

having the opportunity to form a relationship with teachers and students, while also being

aware of current theory-based research in the field of teacher education, I was able to create a mentoring relationship that was a form of individualized professional development, which is a highly desirable mentoring format (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Norman and Feiman-Nemser, 2005). Thus, this opportunity is the impetus for future research in the area of re-theorizing mentoring relationships.

New Directions for Research

This research enhances my understanding of how teachers implement curriculum and pedagogy that facilitates the development of critical literacy. It also contributes to my considerations about how new teachers make sense of educational theories once engaged in their own classroom practice. This study only documented the experiences of one group of students in an English language arts classroom. In future research endeavors, I may examine how one teacher engages several classes in the development of critical literacy or even how this practice looks different across several groups of students with different ability levels. New research may also examine the practices of numerous teachers involved in developing teaching methods for fostering critical literacy. I may also reproduce this study with future pre-service English educators once they enter their induction phase.

My purpose was to document the experience of one first-year teacher and a single group of twenty-three urban students; however, I found that individual students develop critical literacy in different ways based on their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Future research should consider how these students explain how they were affected by this type of pedagogy and curriculum; there is a need for more self-reflection on the part of students. It would be helpful to return to students after the formal research study in order to better understand how they feel this type of pedagogy and curriculum influenced their view

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of education and the world. The research would also be enhanced by returning to the participating teacher in the years following the study. It would be useful to note how this teacher feels her practice was influenced by the collaboration with the university instructor.

Additionally, this study documented the experiences of a first-year, female English teacher who self-identifies as Black and is from a working-class background and a class of mostly Black female students. Tracie's experience with implementing a pedagogy that facilitated the development of critical literacy was, for the most part, a successful endeavor; however, another teacher from a different background may have had a completely dissimilar experience. It would be helpful to replicate this research with teachers who represent a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender identities that may be different from their students.

Closing Thoughts

I would like to return to my earlier contention that when viewed as a multi-dimensional and dynamic concept, literacy development must incorporate the plurality of international cultures and address the issue of how dominant and subordinate messages are perpetuated in every society. By conducting this formal research study in Tracie's English classroom, I have found that a literacy program that enables students to participate in the interpretation of dominant Discourses has the potential to challenge students' current notions of education and engage them in the practice of unpacking the relevance of the text to their lives. In this context, critical literacy encouraged students to question societal conceptions of poverty, race, equity, and equality not only to critique the structures that serve as 'norms,' but also to demonstrate how these 'norms' are not experienced by all members of that society.

As an anti-bias educator committed to the development of teaching methods that empower all students, I hope this work will not only inform the body of research on critical literacy, but will also encourage other scholars to participate in similar projects that support the development of transformative education models. The most important part of this study is that I had the opportunity to not only work with a population of students much like the ones I read about in literature from the field of critical literacy, but that I was also able to present their experiences and provide a space where their voices are valued.

"It's a New Day"

Like many other Americans who volunteered with Barack Obama's political campaign, I been swept up in the messages of "Hope" and "Change" that have resonated from television commercials, Internet advertisements, and songs produced by popular music artists. I am still in shock and awe that the American people have come together to change this country, this world. As I write this paragraph, I think back to just two months ago, when I witnessed the powerful image of the two million people who traveled from all across the country and the world to see Barack Obama be sworn in as the 44th President of the United States of America. I smiled throughout the day and shed tears of happiness and disbelief as I watched footage of the inauguration on CNN.

Like many people, I am hopeful that Americans have begun the process of breaking with the discriminatory and prejudicial traditions on which our country was founded. One day, many years from now, I anticipate the citizens of this world will look back on this time as one of the first steps in a long journey to equality. I am not the idealistic type, so I truly believe that this is a first step and that there are many more to be taken before people begin to appreciate and respect others with cultural differences from their own. Maybe my work will

be one of those steps that encourage people to analyze the ways in which identities are constructed based on our interactions with text.

Over the course of the past four years of my life, I have immersed myself in critical analysis of my perspectives on many aspects of equity, culture, and education. By participating in doctoral courses focused on dismantling social injustice, I have had the opportunity to learn more about critical theory, sociology of education, and the role popular culture plays in the reproduction of dominant ideology, and have had many experiences and multiple conversations that challenged me to be more critical. It is my hope that teacher education programs in this country will continue to challenge pre-service and in-service teachers to engage in the development of critical literacy with all students. I am not idealistic, in fact, I'm often told that I'm overly realistic and too practical; however, even in a time of great disparity in this country, I write this dissertation with renewed hope for the ability of the American people to overcome, to challenge the status quo, and to resist the dominant narratives that have shaped our history. I return to the lyrics of "Yes, We Can," a song written and produced by Will.i.am (2008); the last lines of the song truly represent the goals I hope to achieve through this research:

> We have been told we cannot do this by a chorus of cynics who will only grow louder and more dissonant. We've been asked to pause for a reality check. We've been warned against offering the people of this nation false hope. But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope. We want change! (We want change! I want change! We want change! I want change…)

APPENDIX I

Where I'm From
I am from church on Sundays,
From Winn-Dixie and Cheerwine.
I am from tall oak trees in the back yard.
(branches stretching up
to the Carolina blue sky.)
From the winesap apples baking in the sun
emanating the sweet aroma of cobbler
that Grandma Sally bakes with the flaky,
golden brown crust.

I'm from mostly honors classes, honest grins, and spirit fingers,
the daughter of the homecoming queen
and the rebellious teen
I'm from the wake of a ski boat and
thunderous waves crashing on the shore
I'm from the trailer park and duplexes
on the wrong side of town.

I'm from Ricky and Cathy—
the high school sweethearts who thought
they knew it all.
From my Paw Paw who believed in me
no matter what.

I am from, "Do you remember so-and-so?"
And, "We don't do that in our family."
From running as fast as I could
until I broke free of the ropes that threatened
to bind me
and make me one of them.

I am from first in a long line of firsts
Balancing the leaves crunching under my bare feet in the country
With the clicks of my heels through the halls of Academia.

--Heather Coffey
Adapted from "Where I'm From," by George Ella Lyon

Attention to the researcher's subjectivity or personal opinions about data and

experiences has not been considered negative in qualitative research as it has in other

research paradigms.   In fact, subjectivity can help with issues of validity in that it challenges researchers to be reflexive about their own biases and emotional reactions to the research setting (Collins, 1998; Glesne 2006). The researcher's objective in qualitative studies is to investigate feelings in order to better understand his/her personal boundaries and limitations in analysis. Glesne (2006) suggests, "When you monitor your subjectivity, you increase your awareness of the ways it might distort, but you also increase your awareness of its virtuous capacity" (p. 123).

Throughout this piece, I use a theoretical framework as conceptualized from the fields of standpoint theory (Collins, 1998) and White racial identity formation (Carter & Helms, 1990). In her book, Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice (1998) Black feminist critical social theorist Patricia Hill Collins (1998) hypothesizes that social theory always has roots in a struggle for social, political, and economic justice and that all theories develop around issues of power. Collins proposes that researchers who have a plural identity or "outsider-within" status, are more likely to gain access to the group they are studying. Outsiders-within belong to more than one social group and are able to cross borders into "spaces occupied by groups of unequal power" (p. 5). In this section, I describe how both my cultural background and my experience as a teacher make it possible for me to "produce distinctive oppositional knowledges that embrace multiplicity yet remain cognizant of power" (p. 8). Although I am White and a member of the Academy, I also hold tight to my identity as a female from a working class background, both of which have caused struggle in my life at some point. My feet are firmly planted on two separate grounds, one foot on each—this gap bridged by my educational experience. Below, I explore how this multiplicity of identities bring me to this work.

Intersectionality

For some scholars who focus on issues of social justice and anti-bias identity formation, a single experience marks the defining moment in their transformation— this might be a solitary moment where Whiteness and the privilege associated with the power of Whiteness was identified (Anders, Bryan, & Noblit, 2005); however, my identity and understanding of the significance of my Whiteness occurred throughout my life through a series of events and relationships. The intersectionality of my race and class are fundamental to my understanding of these relationships. Collins (1998) explains that examining this complex layers of oneself "provide an interpretive framework for thinking through how intersections of race and class, or race and gender, or sexuality and class, for example, shape any group's experience across specific social contexts" (p. 208). In the following section, I explore experiences and relationships from childhood through the point I identify as my transformation into an anti-bias educator. By looking at the mentor/protégé relationships that have characterized my life, I am able to better understand the multiple encounters that have been pivotal in my decision to participate in this type of dissertation study.

The Educator

In order for me to fully explore the relationship between Tracie and myself, I must explain who I am and why this work is important to me. When I was a senior in high school, I developed a close bond with an English teacher who acted as a mentor to me. Because of the supportive nature of this relationship, I knew that I would become an educator. My relationship with Tracie closely mirrors that connection that I experienced with my high school senior English teacher.

In high school, my teachers were mostly White men and women who dressed casually and talked about their children; however, the woman who had the most profound influence on my educational future was a professionally dressed, very private Black woman who had the highest expectations for all her students. Mrs. Scotland is, without a doubt, the reason I became a teacher. She spent hours with me after school working on college entrance essays and mock-interview questions for scholarships. Mrs. Scotland also challenged me to become a better writer and researcher; she never accepted mediocrity from anyone. I had the utmost respect for this woman who was the most intelligent, professional, and eloquent person I had ever met. The respect must have been mutual because when she went on a medical leave of absence my senior year of college, Mrs. Scotland asked me to substitute for her for a month. She trusted me to prepare her ninth graders for End-of-Course testing and to guide the research and writing process for her AP English students. Although I had not yet begun my student teaching intership, I was greatly honored that she had so much faith in my ability as an educator; she could have asked anyone to take her place, but she chose me. Mrs. Scotland was an instrumental force both in my attending college and becoming an English teacher. From this highly qualified English educator, I learned that I could achieve excellence through diligent work.

The relationship I developed with Tracie from the time we met in 2006 through today is similar to the relationship I had with Mrs. Scotland, which was extremely transformative for me. I feel that the reason that Tracie and I were able to develop this collaborative bond because we both had multicultural backgrounds and challenging educational experiences that made us want to be great teachers. I explain these experiences in the next section.

Critical Framework

Before I explain why certain relationships and events have shaped my development as an anti-bias educator, I provide a critical framework for self-analysis. Psychologist and scholar in the field of urban education, Michelle Fine (1994) suggests that in order for ethnographers to better understand the participants' actions and thoughts, they must ask hard questions about personal biases, experiences, and perspectives that shape interpretation of data, especially when working with marginalized or objectified groups. Fine poses a series of questions concerned with interrupting "*Othering*" (p. 131) in qualitative research and contends that an ethnographer must engage in "unpacking notions of scientific neutrality, universal truths, and researcher dispassion" (p. 131). As an ethnographer, it is essential that I not pretend that I am a neutral person who does not bring prior experiences to my analysis of people and situations. Furthermore, by unpacking my own beliefs, I am able to understand why I choose to look at the data with certain viewpoints.

Whiteness

The first and most obvious category with which I identify is Whiteness, and this descriptor is laden with hidden implications, one of which is White privilege. Peggy MacIntosh (1995) describes white privilege as an 'invisible knapsack,' or

> an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, code books, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks. (p. 77).

Being White usually carries with it the privilege of not ever having to know what it is like to have to think about the color of my skin. I cannot speak for all White people, but I must say that I might not have been completely aware of the benefits White privilege provides had I not read the literature on Whiteness identity development and questioned my friends of color

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about their notions about White people. After reading Maurice Berger's (1999)*White Lies*, book chapters and articles by Christine Sleeter (1993) and Beverly Daniel Tatum (1994), and chapters from *Off White* (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Weng, 1997) and *What We Still Don't Know about Teaching Race* (Hughes, 2005), I was challenged to evaluate my own positionality of Whiteness and assess how the assumptions I carried with me were either beneficial or detrimental to myself and others.

Psychologists Robert Carter and Janet Helms (1990) provide a framework for evaluating Whiteness when they created the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale, which is a six-step process that begins with the realization of the implications of Whiteness and continues through stages that eventually lead to a consciousness of White culture and how Whiteness oppresses and marginalizes other non-White groups of people. Updated in 2004, these schemas include:

> (a) Contact, involving denial of the meaningfulness of race in one's life and in society in general; (b)Disintegration, characterized by confusion about the social rules of White socialization; (c) Reintegration, defined by a belief in the innate superiority of White people and oneself as a member of the White group; (d) Pseudo-Independence, characterized by an intellectualized awareness of the privileges of being a member of the White group; and (e) Autonomy, defined by nonracist identification with the White group; and (f) Immersion-Emersion, a status which Whites begin an active exploration of what it means to be White. (Carter, Helms, & Juby, 2004, p. 3)

When thinking about how I have emerged through these stages over the course of my life, I must ask myself where I fall along this continuum. This is a difficult question because I represent a multiplicity of backgrounds that have conflicting values and expectations. The Immersion-Emersion stage seems to most appropriately characterize my life at this point. On a daily basis, I am challenged to evaluate how my experiences are governed by the color of my skin; I constantly think about how I interpret the world based on my position as a white female. I go through my day wondering what experiences people of color have had with

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white females like myself, and I try to be cognizant of the possibilities while interacting with all people.

In addition to thinking about how my identity as a White female influences the way I interpret the world, I also have to take into account my perspective as a female who still considers myself a member of the working class, despite my academic mobility. I write this part of my dissertation from the viewpoint of a first-generation college student who was raised by a single mother and a maternal grandfather from a blue-collar background.

East Side

Growing up in a variety of multi-cultural neighborhoods and attending schools with diverse populations gave me access to cultures and experiences that I might not have had if my family was a part of the white, middle class society. When considering specific people and events in my life that might have influenced my open-mindedness and compassion for people of all ethnicities and backgrounds, I think of my life experiences and the lessons I have learned from members of cultures quite different from my own.

I fondly remember Claudia Cassana, a Peruvian teenager whose family lived next door to my mother, stepfather and me when I was six. My mother waited tables and cooked at several restaurants when she and I moved into a working class neighborhood on the east side of Charlotte, NC. While she worked her many jobs, she often left me in the care of our Peruvian neighbors who treated me as one of their family members. This extended family included sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and many other people who frequently visited their lively house. I often played with the children in the family, ate meals prepared by the matriarch, Eva, and spent nights in their home. I often accompanied the Cassanas to family celebrations, where I learned to speak Spanish, and when I learned to dance, it was to Latin

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music. When we moved around the block, the Cassanas remained an integral part of my life as Claudia still baby-sat often.

After my mother divorced my first stepfather,[33] Claudia moved in with my mother and me. While my mother worked, Claudia took care of me and finished her associate's degree at the local community college. She treated me as a little sister, helped me with my homework, and taught me how to behave and respect my elders. The Cassanas were my surrogate family for about three years, which was during a major developmental stage in my life. The Cassanas taught me that some cultures embraced outsiders and made them members of a family, and Claudia, leading by example, impressed upon me the importance of education. Although Claudia is no longer a part of my life, memories of my childhood experiences with her and the values she instilled in me are still very much a part of who I am.

When thinking of my childhood, I also think of Tiffany, my first Black friend. Her parents were professionals and extremely caring and involved in their children's lives. We had sleepovers at both of our homes, and I remember loving the comfort and stability of her two-parent household. Her father had the unfortunate responsibility of explaining the "birds and the bees" when Tiffany attempted to give me her own version when we were eight. I will always remember getting a bit sick to my stomach in the backseat of their car while Dr. Pace tried to give me a medical explanation of "where babies came from." Not only did I respect him because he was a doctor, but he was also a father, and since I did not have one, I often pretended he was my own. Like the Cassanas, the Pace family welcomed me into their home and showed me how a "traditional" family looked.

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[33]My mother and my biological father divorced when I was three, and he died when I was five-years-old.

Despite living in an economically mixed area of town, I attended an executive elite[34] public elementary school because my mother used her work address to keep me enrolled at this prestigious public school. When I was too old for daycare, I walked to and from school with these children because my mother worked in the kitchen of a trendy, upscale restaurant in their neighborhood. The students in my classes were wealthy and lived within walking distance of my school in an old, established neighborhood. Students invited me to their homes for their birthday parties, but I never invited them home with me because I realized the disparity between our lifestyles and housing. These children had huge houses, with grand staircases, pools, private bathrooms, and walls of toys. They had new clothes, two parents, and new cars in the driveways, and other families did not live on the other side of the walls of their bedrooms. They all were White. The relationships I developed with the girls in my class were extremely superficial, and I never quite felt comfortable being in their homes. From them, I learned the academic value of competition and the rules of the game called, "school."

Looking back, I do not remember thinking I was poor, but I knew that I did not have all the luxuries my classmates had. I am not sure they even knew because my mother dressed me in designer labels from the thrift store. I remember going to the houses of these children and just being amazed that they had elevators and huge back yards in which to play. I never really identified wealth and privilege with Whiteness though because I was White, and I knew what it was like to be a "have not." Besides, my friend Tiffany, who attended private school, was wealthy, had a stable family, and she was Black. At the age of nine, I never made the connection between Whiteness and privilege.

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[34]"The majority of pupils' fathers in this school were vice presidents or more advanced corporate executives in U.S.-based multinational firms on Wall Street. Most family incomes were over $100,000 during the period of the study…" (Anyon, J., 1980. p. 5).

The friends from my neighborhood, those kids who did not go to school with me were Black, Lumbee (Native American), Hispanic, and Asian…not White. I did not maintain friendships from the neighborhoods I lived in because we moved quite often, as did the children on my street. My house always had another family living on the other side of the wall. My house always had two keys, one for me and one for my mom. My house had a hard-working mother in her early twenties, hand-me-down furniture, and a stereo that belted loud music...all of the other houses and families in my neighborhood were very similar.

My friends from that part of my life can be placed in two categories—neighborhood friends, who were ethnically diverse, and school friends, who were mostly White. Now that I think back, I can only remember having few students of color in my classes when I went to the school on the east side of town. Looking at my class pictures from kindergarten through the third grade reveals that barely one third of each class was minority. We all played together in school during recess, but I did not develop close friendships with anyone in my class. Actually, I can remember being very competitive with my White, female classmates; I always wanted to have the best grades and the best attendance record. While at this school, I was never absent and my report cards show that I made all A grades. I remember the imminent sense of pride I felt during awards ceremonies when I was given certificates of "Perfect Attendance" and "Academic Excellence." These tokens were rewards for my hard work and dedication; I did not need swimming pools and designer clothes.

West Side

When we relocated to the west side of Charlotte when I was ten, my mother and I moved into my grandfather's house. This neighborhood, established in the 1940s, developed around the members of the Methodist church on the corner. The houses in my new

neighborhood stood back off the road with wide, green front yards and towering oak and magnolia trees. Many of the houses were inhabited by older White couples, but few of my neighbors had children with whom to play. Down the street about a mile, where the road made a sharp curve, there was a neighborhood of small, muddy, white clapboard houses which were inhabited by Black families. I was warned by my White neighbors not to ride my bike or walk past Snappy's, the local grocery mart that separated the White section of our road from the Black section. I remember being confused by these words of caution because I rode the same bus as the children from the Black neighborhood. I did not understand why these people or their children would be considered dangerous; after all, they went to my school and played with me everyday on the playground. Moving into this rural neighborhood introduced me to a delineation between White and Black.

When I moved from the east to the west side of town in fourth grade, there were students of all ethnic backgrounds in my class; in fact, the minority to White ratio in my classes was about half. While at the west side elementary school, I developed close friendships with two girls, Elizabeth, a White girl from a two-parent home and Sidney, an Black girl from a single-parent home. I spent almost equal time with both of these girls, but never mixed the friendships. Sidney would come to my house often, but Elizabeth was not allowed to play at other people's homes. Although I was closer to Sidney, I went to Elizabeth's house more often because she lived near the school. Sidney was bussed to school, so it was difficult to go to her home as much because she lived far from school and my mother worked late.

Consequently, in the fourth grade, I was given a head start on my Black peers.

When I entered middle school, I started to realize that the competition between students in my class became even more intense. At this point, my first priority became school, not friendships; thus, for about three years (from 7th grade until the end of 9th grade) I spent most of my time doing school work.   Although there was more diversity in my middle school, there were very few students of color in my classes. In addition to two Asian Indian males, there were only three Black students in these classes, which were tracked by that point. Still, I had friends of color because I played in community sports leagues and on school teams. Even though these students were not in my classes, we formed bonds and friendships while playing years of softball and soccer and running track and cheerleading together. However, these children did not live in my neighborhood and were not in my classes.

High School

During middle school, I moved several more times with my mother and her new husband. I decided that I needed more stability, and at the age of fifteen, I moved back to the little brick ranch with my grandparents, where I had intermittently lived throughout my life. I did not focus much on the social aspects of school because thanks to regular meetings with school guidance counselors and my older peers in advanced classes, I knew that having an academic transcript that displayed my participation in civic groups, sports, and part-time employment would help me get into college. Maintaining the friendships I had formed in middle school was easy because most of those same students were still in my classes, my mostly White classes. Socially, I was a "floater" and did not identify with one particular peer group; therefore, I had acquaintances in almost every social group.

When I dated, I generally dated White males, but I had a significant relationship with a boy whose parents were Brazilian. By this point, I was sixteen, and my grandparents had retired, so they traveled often. Thus, I spent much of my time with my boyfriend's family, who thought of me as their "other" daughter. Again, a family of a different cultural background made me an honorary member, and I adopted their values and expectations. Even when the relationship ended with their son, I maintained a role in their family structure into my second year of college. The family valued education as one of the most important methods for social mobility. They were always involved in their children's education as the mother was an elementary teacher's aid earning her bachelor's degree in education. From this family, I learned even more about the "traditional" family model and that love could support a child through almost any situation.

College

Going to college was the next phase of my life that had significant impact on my identity development. I am the first and still, the only person who has attended college in my family; therefore, I had no idea of what to expect from the experience. Attending a small, private liberal arts college in the south reminded me of elementary school—again, I was different than my White classmates. The only reason I was able to attend college was because of the full academic scholarship I earned. The majority of students at this school were wealthy and White. The leisure and privilege exhibited by my White peers in college was a stark contrast to my own experience. I knew I was in college on an academic scholarship, and I knew that if I did not focus on school, I would have to leave. While my hallmates were going skiing for fall break and on cruises for spring break, I was at home working at my part-time job. While in college, I realized that I was not like my White peers.

Although we shared the same shade of skin, I did not take my education for granted and was extremely aware I was only there because of my scholarship. I felt that being in college was a privilege, and I worked extremely hard, academically, to achieve respectable grades.

Although I was not wealthy, I fit in because I was White, and segregation at this college was painfully obvious. Because there were a limited number of Black students, I remember having few friends of color. In my education cohort, there was only one Black female, Felicia, and she went home every weekend. Looking back, I understand why she did not stay in the dorm on the weekends or hang out with the rest of our cohort—she did not feel welcome.

My second year of college, I studied abroad in England, and Felicia was one of my five roommates. I remember her telling me how much she could barely tolerate two of our other roommates, who were White, because of their sense of entitlement. I remember experiencing exactly the same feelings and being able to confront them when they were loud and messy. Felicia never caused controversy in our apartment because she did not feel empowered to do so; she did not want situations to escalate into a Black/White issue. Her whole life, she had been socialized to resist confrontation with Whites because she knew that people would assume her anger and exasperation were racially motivated. Although Felicia never explicitly told me this, she implied that I was the only person in the apartment with whom she felt she could share.

Looking back, I am extremely saddened that this successful woman was silenced by the power of White privilege. I am also now more aware of how some institutions set students of color up for failure by not providing them with mentors or support groups to have other people with whom they can talk about their experiences. As a first generation college

student, I was able to make the connection between this woman and myself because I would have appreciated more guidance on how to navigate the difficulties of university life.

These experiences truly made an impact on my development as a person who is empathetic with those who are typically othered in society. A recent conversation helped me to understand why I might be more compassionate to the struggles and issues close to communities of marginalized people. Thousands of White people have been "raised" by caregivers of color, people who came into their houses and were responsible for the rearing of the children. However, the people of color who "raised" me did not just come into my home; they invited me into their homes, their families, their lives, their cultures, each of them making a mark on the character I have developed. I am an amalgamation of cultures— White, Peruvian, African American, Italian, and Brazilian, all contained in a strawberry blond-haired, blue-eyed, fair-skinned body. I realize that I have not experienced any of the discrimination that these influential people in my life may have; however, their significant presence in my life has kept me from discriminating against people I have encountered who are different than me. For these reasons, I am comfortable socializing with people from all backgrounds and am often the only White person in a multicultural group of people. I appreciate and value the backgrounds of all my friends and have learned that if I want to know more about their culture, all I have to do is ask—this is even more important in the classroom.

Becoming an Educator:

From one side of the desk to the other

When I first began teaching, I tried to be appreciative of cultures and experiences that were different from my own. During the first five years of my career as a middle school

educator, the student population of my school went from being majority rural, poor, and White to being majority urban, poor, and Black within the span of a year due to redistricting. This change in the school demographic altered the way I looked at children and approached teaching forever.

Novice Educator

After graduating from college, I began teaching in a middle school with a mostly White population; however, in my second year of teaching, redistricting introduced a large population of minority and low-income students from an urban area into our school. This new population of students included Black children from the poorest, most crime-ridden neighborhoods in Greensboro, NC; recent Montagnard[35] immigrants from the central highlands of Vietnam; and the children of Hispanic migrant workers who were employed by the farms surrounding the school. This new mix of students presented challenges that I never anticipated when I signed a contract to teach in a rural middle school. Obviously the school faced great changes that the administration did not expect, and none of my co-workers had any advice to offer since this was either their first job, or they had been teaching the rural White population at the school for over ten years.

After an unsuccessful attempt to engage all of my students that first year of the redistricting, the third year offered promise. In this third year, I began to engage in what I later learned was culturally-relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In the multicultural classroom, the teacher acts as a guide who engages students in discussion and description of feelings on topics such as culture, immigration, sexism, stereotypes, prejudice, and all forms of racism. Banks and Banks (1995) suggest that multicultural education provides "equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and

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[35]"Montagnards." Date Accessed: 29 November, 2008. http://cnnc.uncg.edu/pdfs/montagnards.pdf

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cultural groups" (p. xi). A primary goal of this type of education is to assist students in the development of "the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good" (p. xi). Hoping to create a community in my classroom where all students felt their needs were met and backgrounds represented, I developed a curriculum that would be considered multicultural (Delpit, 1995; Banks and Banks, 1995).

For example, I included *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (Gaines, 1971), which presents the story of a freed slave woman who lived until the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to the narrative of Jane Pittman, I incorporated "I want women to have their rights…I will shake every place I go to," an excerpt from speech presented by Sojourner Truth, appealing for voting rights for Black women. Within this unit, I also used songs about the Civil Rights Movement and interviews with those who participated in sit-ins in the south. I developed this unit because it was particularly relevant to my students; Greensboro was one of the leading sites of the sit-in movement in the south during the 1960s. Because many of the students knew about that history, they were able to make connections between their hometown and the literature. Furthermore, the majority of my students were Black, and I wanted them to read books that told the stories of the struggles Blacks in the south faced during the Civil Rights Movement so that they could better understand the development of their city.

Another unit I developed incorporated the stories of refugees during times of war. The city from which many of my students were bussed boasts the largest population of

Montagnard immigrants in the United States,[36] and many of my students had recently moved to the area from Vietnam. Keeping this in mind, I selected *So far from the bamboo grove* (Watkins, 1994), which is the true story of a Japanese family forced to escape their home in Korea at the end of WW II. Although my Montagnard students could not completely identify with the experiences of Yoko Kawashima, a young Japanese girl, they did understand a history of a people displaced by political strife. The related readings for this text included a portion of *"Where the river runs: A portrait of a refugee family,"* a biography by Nancy Price Graff (1993), who is a Cambodian refugee and a radio transcript from "North and South Korea united in love of Kimchee," which appeared on NPR's *Weekend Edition* (Magistad, 1994). Both of these pieces introduce the idea of how people take their culture with them despite relocation and acculturation to a new habitat. I also introduced students to "Former Yugoslavia: Healing mental wounds," which is an Internet resource from UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) that describes how the organization provides services for children who have been traumatized by war. My Montagnard students were able to identify with the stories presented by these texts and eventually, felt comfortable opening up about their own experiences as refugees from Vietnam.

At the time, I did not realize that this type of instruction was called culturally-relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994); I just knew that the students were not engaged by the material from the textbook, and I wanted to provide texts with which they could identify. Participating in culturally-relevant teaching essentially means that teachers create a bridge between students' home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements. Ladson-Billings (1994) contends that culturally-relevant teachers engage in "a pedagogy that empowers students

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[36] "Montagnards." Date Accessed: 29 November, 2008. http://cnnc.uncg.edu/pdfs/montagnards.pdf

intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 17-18).

I am not professing to have been the most culturally aware teacher, but over the five years I worked at the school, I noticed that I was evolving as a person who appreciated diversity, and I attempted to integrate culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994) into my practice by creating a curriculum that was heavily-laden with multicultural (Delpit, 1995; Banks & Banks, 1995) literature, historical research from multiple perspectives, and outside resources and activities that incorporated the students' interests and backgrounds.

Transformative Educator

Although I am a White female and representative of the majority of the teaching population in America, I have learned to challenge the accepted 'norms' of curriculum, pedagogy, and content of the traditional model of schooling. Through my evaluation of a system that consistently demoralizes and marginalizes students and perpetuates racism, sexism, and a wealth of other -isms, my eyes have been opened not only to the ways teachers enable the system to continue, but also the ways that *I* facilitated its growth in *my* own classroom. Unfortunately, despite moving away from racism by recognizing cultural differences, I did not fully understand my role in the perpetuation of institutional -isms by participating in traditional schooling models, which includes high-stakes standardized testing, banking education (Freire, 1970), and punishing students who are labeled as being not academically proficient by giving them more work. Even though I questioned the tracking system and the enrollment of minority students in required tutorial sessions during their elective classes, I did not recognize these as discriminatory practices.

Anti-bias Educator

Upon increasing my understanding of multiculturalism and culturally-relevant pedagogy in both my masters and doctoral programs, I began to see how many common practices in public schools were extremely oppressive to minority groups. Thus, I began to challenge institutional racism by exposing my pre-service teachers to readings by and experiences of marginalized and oppressed people. Now, I regularly engage my students in critical reflection about their identity in order to have them examine the stereotypes they have of other people and the stereotypes others have of them based on race. Both academic and personal experiences of the past four years have led me to the conclusion that I am now an anti-bias teacher educator.

I understand that identifying myself as an anti-bias teacher can be problematic. After all, a White female categorizing herself as a person who has liberated herself from racism and White race denial sounds somewhat idealistic, but the experiences I have had in both my professional and personal life have led me to this conclusion. Some educational theorists would identify me as a 'white ally' or describe me as having a 'pro-active white identity,' (Tatum 1994; Lawrence & Tatum 1997), but I prefer to consider myself an anti-bias, White female. Beverly Daniel Tatum (1994) identifies the 'white ally' as someone who "break[s] free from the confines of the racist socialization they surely experienced to redefine themselves…" (p. 472). Immersing myself in courses and readings focused on critical race theory and critical pedagogy has given me the opportunity to explore who I am, and my perspective of my role in society has changed drastically since hearing the viewpoints of those people society has labeled as "Other." Additionally, becoming involved in the

community surrounding the university has also given me the opportunity to become familiar with the dilemmas of citizens who face discrimination.

The Academy

It is my development as an anti-bias, white female that has lead to my interest in the cultivation of critical literacy through the use of critical pedagogy. By providing opportunities to observe the practices of emancipatory education in diverse settings, I hope to be able to demonstrate effective practices to both in-service and pre-service teachers in order to explain critical literacy theory. Through this study, I have learned more about how practitioners contest institutional –isms in their own classrooms on a daily basis. In this study, my open-mindedness and awareness of racial, socio-economic, and cultural differences forced me to be consistently aware of my positionality.

Othering from within the Academy

I hope that my role as an academic will provide a platform to tell the stories of teachers who want to empower and encourage students to be successful academically, but who are also stifled by the current foci of the education system (i.e. high stakes standardized testing, No Child Left Behind Legislation). Because the very nature of higher education and academia contains privilege and power; it is often difficult for researchers to penetrate the group they study. Though researchers may speak from the perspective of the particular group being studied, they are still representative of the voice of privilege simply because of the education they have earned and the status they have achieved. Because I represent academia, more specifically, a premier research university located in the south, people automatically make assumptions about who I am. By and large, this university has a reputation for catering to an upper, middle-class, White population that often exhibits attitude

of entitlement. Regardless of the degree of truth behind that stereotype, it is prevalent both within and outside of the university, and I am aware of how this might be challenged by those in the public schools. People may judge me based on the supposition that I am representative of the typical population of the university.

By showing sincerity in my attempt to work with participants, I demonstrated my honest interest in their needs. When I proposed this study to the principal and school district for approval, I explained that I was a veteran public school teacher, currently enrolled in a doctoral program concerned with improving the schooling experience for typically marginalized students. In suggesting that I wanted to observe the practice of a teacher who I thought had developed a sense of community within her classroom and used effective pedagogy to inform her teaching practice, I gained the trust of the administration and offered them access to my study for future use. As a member of the university, it is extremely important for me to develop trust within the sites in which I work and volunteer.

Furthermore, it is important that I consider the implications of my own identity in this dissertation. As the child of a working-class, single parent I may view the stories told by Tracie and her students with more empathy than someone with a different experience. Regardless of my current position in society, I will always speak from the perspective of a White female who was raised in a working class neighborhood by people who ascribe to the idea that if a person works hard, then that person will benefit. Although I have improved my socio-economic status through academic advancement, I still identify with my family and childhood friends who, at most, have high school educations. I do not consider myself superior to any of these people who have influenced my life so profoundly, and I constantly have to remind myself that they may think that I feel superior due to my involvement in

higher education. I will never disregard my socio-economic background and will use it to inform my study of educational practices.

I provide this information about my background and experience to enable the reader to better understand why I think I have developed into an empathetic teacher educator truly concerned with the needs of the growing number of students who are not being challenged and encouraged by traditional models of schooling. My background and values have enabled me to understand and appreciate the multiplicity of experiences of others without "othering" them in the process.

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Parental Permission for a Minor Child to Participate in a Research Study
Social Behavioral Form
_____

You are being asked to grant parental permission for your child to participate in a research study regarding the educational experience of your child who is enrolled in one section of the Advanced Placement English Language and Composition course at Southern High School in Durham, NC. During the course of the study, your child's class will be observed by a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Your child will in no way be identifiable in the data. Your child may also be asked to participate in an interview session with the researcher who hopes to determine which teaching practices are most effective and appreciated by students enrolled in the course.

IRB Study #_____
Consent Form Version Date: December 1, 2007
Title of Study:

"The Challenge of Teachers: The Role of Critical Literacy in Empowering and Improving Academic Performance of Urban Youth"_____

Principal Investigator: Heather Coffey
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Education/Culture, Curriculum, and Change
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number:
Email Address: hcoffey@email.unc.edu
Co-Investigators:
Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Trier
Funding Source: none

Study Contact telephone number: 336-392-4911
Study Contact email: hcoffey@email.unc.edu
_____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future.   Your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you and your child can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this permission form. You and your child should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about the teaching practices that are most effective for students enrolled in an Advanced Placement course at a low-performing school. In order to better prepare teachers to be more successful in schools in urban settings, the researcher hopes to observe your child's teacher to determine what practices she uses that the students find beneficial, challenging, and empowering.

Your child is being asked to be in the study because he/she is enrolled in an Advanced Placement course.

How many people will take part in this study?
If your child is in this study, your child will be one of approximately 24 people in this research study. The teacher, along with other students enrolled in this course will be a part of the research study.

How long will your child's part in this study last?
Your child will be asked to participate in this study for approximately six months, but will only be asked to participate in a separate interview one time for approximately 20 minutes. All other observations will be non-intrusive and will not affect your child in class.

What will happen if your child takes part in the study?
Over the course of the next school semester, the researcher will observe the daily routine of your child's teacher approximately 10-12 times. In addition to class observations, the interviewer will speak to each student in the class (based on student consent) one time. Your child will be interviewed to determine what aspects of the course are most and least beneficial to them. These interviews will be audio recorded and will take place in the teacher's office and will not affect your child's grade in the class. At no time will the researcher share responses that could be identified by the teacher. Your child will only be asked to participate in interviews that will last approximately 20 minutes.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your child may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
There are no known risks involved with this research study.

How will your child's privacy be protected?

Privacy and confidentiality of your child will be protected through the following methods:
- Your child's personal data will appear no where on the interview transcript and pseudonyms will be used as an identifier.
- All records will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher's computer, which is in the researcher's private home office. Access to the computer is not permitted as the researcher's home office will remain locked at all times.
- The only person who will have access to individually identifiable data (interview recordings) will be the researcher and her advisor.
- The researcher will not use names or ID numbers for the purpose of this study. Codes or numbers will be assigned to each student and those will be the only link between student and data.

Participants **will not** be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.
- ***For studies that involve video or audio recording:***
  - All audio tapes will be maintained in a locked file in the home office of the researcher.
  - Upon completion of the interview and transcription of the data, the interviewer will maintain the tapes for seven years. After seven years, the tapes will be destroyed and no one will have access to the data.
  - You may request that your child not be audio taped for any reason.
    Check the line that best matches your choice:
    _____ OK to record me during the study
    _____ Not OK to record me during the study

Will your child receive anything for being in this study?
Your child will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything for your child to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you are a UNC employee?
Your child's taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing to give permission will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if your child takes part in this research.

What if you or your child has questions about this study?
You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you or your child has questions about your child's rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your child's rights and welfare. If you or your child has questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

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Title of Study: "The Challenge of Teachers: The Role of Critical Literacy in Empowering and Improving Academic Performance of UrbanYouth"_____

Principal Investigator: Heather Coffey

Parent's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study.

_____
Printed Name of Research Participant (Child)

_____   _____
Signature of Parent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Parent

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
Adolescent Participants age 15-17
Social Behavioral Form
_____
You are being asked to participate in this research study regarding your educational experience based on your enrollment in one section of the Advanced Placement English Language and Composition course at Southern High School in Durham, NC. During the course of the study, your class will be observed by a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. You will in no way be identifiable in the data. You may also be asked to participate in an interview session with the researcher who hopes to determine which teaching practices are most effective and appreciated by students enrolled in the course.

IRB Study #_____
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Principal Investigator: Heather Coffey
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Email Address:
Co-Investigators:
Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Trier
Funding Source: None

Study Contact telephone number: 336-392-4911
Study Contact email: hcoffey@email.unc.edu
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What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your parent, or guardian, needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to, even if your parent has already given permission. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future.   You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

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What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about the teaching practices that are most effective for students enrolled in an Advanced Placement course at a low-performing school in an urban setting. In order to better prepare teachers to be more successful in schools in urban settings, the researcher hopes to observe your teacher to determine what practices she uses that the students find beneficial, challenging, and empowering.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are enrolled in an Advanced Placement course.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 24 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
You will be asked to participate in this study for approximately six months, but will only be asked to participate in a separate interview one time for approximately 20 minutes. All other observations will be non-intrusive and will not affect you in class.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
Over the course of the next school semester, the researcher will observe the daily routine of your teacher approximately 10-12 times. In addition to class observations, the interviewer will speak to each student in the class (based on student consent) one time. You will be interviewed to determine what aspects of the course are most and least beneficial to you. These interviews will be audio recorded and will take place in the teacher's office and will not affect your grade in the class. At no time will the researcher share responses that could be identified by the teacher. You will only be asked to participate in interviews that will last approximately 20 minutes.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your child may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
There are no known risks involved with this research study.

How will your privacy be protected?
Your privacy and confidentiality of will be protected through the following methods:
- Your personal data will appear no where on the interview transcript and pseudonyms will be used as an identifier.
- All records will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher's computer, which is in the researcher's private home office. Access to the computer is not permitted as the researcher's home office will remain locked at all times.

- The only person who will have access to individually identifiable data (interview recordings) will be the researcher and her advisor.
- The researcher will not use names or ID numbers for the purpose of this study. Codes or numbers will be assigned to each student and those will be the only link between student and data.

Participants *will not* be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

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  o You may request that you not be audio taped for any reason.
    Check the line that best matches your choice:
    _____ OK to record me during the study
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All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

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Title of Study: "The Challenge of Teachers: The Role of Critical Literacy in Empowering and Improving Academic Performance of UrbanYouth"_____

Principal Investigator: Heather Coffey

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time.
I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Your signature if you agree to be in the study   Date

_____
Printed name if you agree to be in the study

APPENDIX III

Goodall's (2000) questions for entering into ethnographic research:

- How do you appropriate entry into a site?
- How do you legitimately gain the confidence and trust of informants?
- How do you conceal or reveal your identity and ethnographic purpose?
- How do you deal with the everyday questions of your own position in relation to your participants' lives? Your own interference in and with their lives?
- How should you handle intimacy with informants? What kinds of relationships and levels of interpersonal contact are appropriate?
- Under what conditions, if any, should you acquire, use, or appropriate their cultural knowledge for our own career advancement?
- How should ethnographers represent what may, to an academic audience, appear to be 'inarticulateness' of cultural others as having been fully articulate within their local context?
- What should you or should you not do with information about illegal, unethical, or immoral activities?
- How do you prepare yourself and your respondents when you plan to leave the fieldwork site?
- What should you be expected to give back to those whom you've lived with and studied? (p. 154)

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APPENDIX IV

A Change is Gonna Come Lyrics
Artist: Sam Cooke
I was born by the river in a little tent
Oh and just like the river I've been running ever since
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

It's been too hard living but I'm afraid to die
Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

I go to the movie and I go downtown
Somebody keep telling me don't hang around
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

Then I go to my brother
And I say brother help me please
But he winds up knocking me
Back down on my knees

Ohhhhhhhhh.....

There been times that I thought I couldn't last for long
But now I think I'm able to carry on
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

Yes We Can Lyrics
Artist: Will.i.am/John Favreau

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation.
Yes we can.
It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail toward freedom.
Yes we can.
It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness.
Yes we can.
It was the call of workers who organized; women who reached for the ballots; a President who chose the moon as our new frontier; and a King who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the Promised Land.
Yes we can to justice and equality.
Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity.
Yes we can heal this nation.
Yes we can repair this world.
Yes we can.
We know the battle ahead will be long, but always remember that no matter what obstacles stand in our way, nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change. (We want change.)
We have been told we cannot do this by a chorus of cynics…they will only grow louder and more dissonant ……….. We've been asked to pause for a reality check. We've been warned against offering the people of this nation false hope.
But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope.

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Now the hopes of the little girl who goes to a crumbling school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of LA; we will remember that there is something happening in America; that we are not as divided as our politics suggests; that we are one people; we are one nation; and together, we will begin the next great chapter in the American story with three words that will ring from coast to coast; from sea to shining sea: Yes We Can.

Feel Me Lyrics
Artist(Band):**Lil' Wayne**

[Interviewer:]
So "Little Wayne," whats your motivation?

[Lil' Wayne:]
Is that really a question
Do you really have that written down in your notepad
You should be ashamed of yourself
You smell me girl
I smell like money
See, thats what they don't understand (Tell 'em a god damn thang)
To me it was always get money or die
I come up under Birdman the Number One Stunner
You know what I mean I'm stunner junior thats all I know thats all I ever knew
Get money or get nothing you know what I'm saying
And I feel that way
Foreal

[Verse 1:]
So hard I go I keep pushing
The game so crazy I'm in it like deep pussy
I got chip from trying to get the whole cookie
Used to make a thousand dollars everytime I played hookie
Dwayne Carter absent keep looking
I'm present on the block
I'm a legend on the block
Ice so bright like heaven on the watch
Yea nigga I done dropped one eleven on the watch
So watch and see what I do
Breeze by you so fast got you sneezing hachoo
They got the shivers 'mayne I got the fever
I got to bring the hood back after Katrina
Weezy F. Baby now the F is for FEMA
Sick nigga bitch I spit that Leukemia
Yea no cure no help
So me so good so hard so felt
Feel me

[Lil' Wayne:]
And thats just my point right there
Thats what I'm always trying to stress know what I'm saying
If you don't understand me if you don't feel me then you ain't real
In my eyes, and thats all that count to me you know

[Interviewer:]
So, is your music considered the voice of urban America or America period

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[Lil' Wayne:]
I mean, I would say the voice of the hood 'cause thats who I speak for
And myself, you know what I mean, my family thats who I represent
My hommies, my girl, my life you know

[Verse 2:]
C'mon, bang this shit nigga pump my shit
You gotta bang that wimp and go and dump that bitch
You gotta claim that strip and go and flood that bitch
You gotta aim that shit and straight bust that shit
Like motherfuck them niggas what they wan-do I'm ready
Tevin Campbell, no homo, black rambo
Fucking with the boy baby thats a cambo
If he won in vegas leave him on the crap table
I'm willing and I'm able to come run up in your stable
Like nobody make a sound where the paper where the paper
Gotta get it gotta have it
Once I got it I'mma spend it
Then its back to doing any damn thing just to get it
The re-ups be like birthday parties
No room to park the cars in the garages
So outside the cribs all you see is arayis
If I ain't say it right fuck it I ain't foreign
Feel me

[Lil' Wayne:]
And see thats where everybody get me wrong at you know what I mean
I got that heat rock, foreal

[Interviewer:]
Why do you think other rappers lack the impact of your music

[Lil' Wayne:]
Thats because they ain't got that heat rock like me you know what I mean
They ain't spitting like me
They spitting, but, know what I mean, they ain't got colds
I got the flu over here man, foreal
I need relief, y'all help me
I know y'all sick of me, 'cause I'm tired of y'all foreal

[Verse 3:]
And based on the bank, I'm doing much better than alot of these niggas
I'm tired of these niggas
Yawning when I see them make me stretch and pull the burner
I'm cocking back and passing
They catch 'em in they sternum
Ooh ooh that gone probably burn ya
That gone probably learn ya
To never ever ever - ever ever ever come around here no more
Rich gangsters over here you gotta die with the broke bitch
I'm the God I should ride with the Pope
But the boy so hood I just ride with my hoe yeah
Yeah, and tell 'em bout Hollygrove
Tell 'em bout my last show
Tell 'em bout my last hoe
You know, just born to mack

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Call me Dione Sanders bring the corner back, yeah
I'm in my prime niggas falling back
Thats right I'm comming baby yeah hard as crack
Feel Me

[Lil' Wayne:]
And thats just what it is nigga
If you don't like my shit then fuck you and your shit man straight up
Thats how I was tought thats how I was brought up
and thats how I'mma go down
Cash-Money Young-Money in your motherfucking throat bitch
Swallow slow
Weezy F. Baby this interview is over, go to the next song
Bitch

Hurricane Katrina: Media Literacy and Social Justice Unit

Curriculum Learning Outcomes:

o   Students will develop skills related to the process of democratic dialogue about controversial issues, especially race and class, as well as the ability to articulate judgments about where they stand based on evidence
o   Students will read and react to written text and visual media to understand the dynamics of Hurricane Katrina and the controversies that surrounded it.
o   Students will develop a sense of empathy with victims of Hurricane Katrina, recognizing that all humans are vulnerable to disasters of one form or another
o   Students will use their new knowledge and skills to get involved in their communities to improve the common good
o   Students will use the information they've been presented as well as their own judgments to create and perform a visual representation of the events of Katrina.
o   Evaluate how a group of citizens becomes the target of discrimination and identify the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship

Day 1: Introduction to New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina

Duration	Activity
5-7 minutes	o Overview of what will occur over next 2 ½ - 3 weeks o Present learning outcomes to students o Respond to initial questions (but not about the final which will be explained on Friday)
15 minutes	o Separate students into groups of 3 o Play power point of New Orleans that contains pictures of city life and its history (hopefully set to the song "When the Saints Go Marching In) o Students will be given a KWL chart on New Orleans and as a group they will discuss and write down what they KNOW about New Orleans (prior to Hurricane Katrina) and fill in the chart o Short discussion/sharing of information
15 minutes	o We will then play the New Orleans Hurricane Memorial Video (if You Tube is not blocked by websense). After watching groups will discuss (and complete chart) for what they KNOW about Hurricane Katrina and its impact on New Orleans o Short discussion/sharing
30-40 minutes	o Watch the first 16 minutes of the film. Students will have questions to answer while watching to ensure that they are paying attention (class work grade) o Questions to discuss with students after the clip

	o What do you know of Spike Lee and why do you think he took on this project? o What are your initial reactions to the first images you encounter in the documentary? o What did you learn or see today that surprised you? o What are you looking forward to learning or exploring in this unit?
Homework	o Students will read the handout "An American City" p. 21-24 of the curriculum. o Using the information provided they must draw a depiction of New Orleans life before Hurricane Katrina. Pictures must be on 8 ½ by 11" paper and must be illustrated and creative.

When the Levees Broke
Part One: Act 1
Chapter 1

1. To whom does Spike Lee dedicate this documentary?
2. What do the opening scenes make you feel about the city?
3. What is FEMA? What is it supposed to do? Who was the director of FEMA at the time of Katrina?
4. What is a "blog"? What was being posted on blogs about Katrina?
5. Who was the mayor of New Orleans when Katrina struck? Who was the governor of Louisiana?
6. On what date did Hurricane Katrina make landfall?
7. When was the city told to evacuate? Who gave the order? Was it voluntary or mandatory?
8. What does Spike Lee want the viewer to think about the order to evacuate? What makes you feel this?
9. What is portrayed as the significance of different "wards" in the city?
10. What category was Hurricane Katrina at maximum? What category was it when it made landfall South of New Orleans?
11. What is the Superdome? Where is it located?
12. How prepared were New Orleans and its residents for evacuation?

Suggested/Approved resources for Katrina play groups
The Federal Emergency Management Agency
http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/noma/
http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=36730
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/edu/docs/Federal%20EM%20Policy%20Changes%20After%20Katrina.pdf
Newswire
http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/feb2008/2008-02-15-02.asp
The Washington Post
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2008/02/21/AR2008022102553.html
Newsweek
http://www.newsweek.com/id/112828
Wikipedia: Caution!!! This is a publicly maintained web resource. All material may not be verifiable or valid.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FEMA_trailer
National Public Radio
http://www.npr.org
CNN
http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/01/29/fema.trailers.ap/index.html
Katrina Images:
http://www.frankwbaker.com/hurricane_katrina_news_photos.htm
Lesson Plans:
http://www.amlainfo.org/resources/classroom-resources/hurricane-katrina

Hurricane Katrina Final Exam
Play and Performance
Grading Rubric

Teacher: Mrs. Teri Almond
Class Mentor: Heather Coffey

CATEGORY	A = 15	B = 10	C = 5	D = 1
Script/Plot	A good turning point. Students express thoughts clearly. Play stayed on topic and made perfectly good sense.	Script made some sense close to topic. Could have been more cleverly written, but it is detailed.	It has some of the info pertaining to Hurricane Katrina. Script made little sense to the reader.	Script went off topic, had no turning point. The script made no sense to the reader.
Characters	Three dimensional characters fit in with the story in just about every scene. The characters made sense when dealing with each other.	Three dimensional characters come in when he/she is supposed to sometimes. Characters make some sense.	Character fits into some parts of the script, however not that many carefully thought out well rounded characters are present.	Script contains flat characters that come in and out of the play and made no sense.
Performance	Students put skill, passion and hard word into their performances. Students were very dedicated to production.	Students tried their best, but they could have been better if they tried harder and pushed themselves to the limit	Students just went out and did what they had to do to complete the assigned task. They were average. Nothing special or outstanding.	Students kept messing up and did not try to do well at all. They did not put any effort into the play at all.
Student Participation	Student attended class everyday. Helps others in the group. Gets involved in all activities and gives 1,000,000%!	Comes to class and/or participates 80% of the time. Does good work but not exceptional.	Comes to class and/or participates 75% of the time. Rarely has anything to say.	Student does not attempt to try. Is not excited or productive in class. Barely shows up (physically/mentally), sleeps and shows no effort.
Entertaining	Excellent performance. Crowd pleasing. Play stays on point and thoroughly entertains.	Showed 75% of work. Showed a lot of effort throughout the performance and was halfway on point.	Performance showed very little effort, partial participation by the cast.	The performance was boring and lacked enthusiasm. The characters appeared as though they didn't try.
Stage Setting And Props	The characters were very aware of their place on stage. The props were clearly used and characters were in plain sight.	Students knew how to use the stage but were awkward at times. The setting and props were okay for the play.	Actors did not know about the setting for the play, and there was no clear use for props.	The students used no props or stage setting. Setting and context were unknown to audience.
Audience Engagement	Audience walked away from play with a life lesson learned. It really made them think about their role in society.	The audience has learned a valuable lesson from the play	The lesson the audience needed to learn needed to be clearer. Play caused confusion	There was no lesson learned. The play lacked a responsibility to teach a moral/social lesson.

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