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This dissertation examines how five self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classroom in a summer school program for gifted students. Critical pedagogy is grounded in a social and educational vision of justice and equity that encourages students and teachers to develop an understanding of the interconnecting relationship between ideology, power, and culture. Critical pedagogy challenges us to identify, engage, and critique (so as to transform) any existing undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that produce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social identities and relations. Data consisted of individual teacher interviews, class observations, student work, and student group interviews. Data suggested that the school administration provided teachers with the freedom to create and enact critical lessons while bringing awareness to students on issues facing their schools, communities and the world.

The results of this research inform the development of critical pedagogy teaching practices in a secondary school with a predominantly privileged student population. In addition, it provides fertile ground for theorizing about the strategies used by secondary school teachers and the role of critical pedagogy in addressing issues of power, equity and social justice.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY PRACTICE SPECIFICS
WITH ADOLESCENTS

by

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To my mother, Teresa de las Mercedes Urrutia B, my father, Nestor R. Pinochet, my American father, James B. Nelson and my American mother, Cheryl L. Nelson, for instilling in me the love of learning, the appreciation for education and all of its possibilities, and for always believing that I have what takes to be successful.
I love you, parents.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

School curricula in the standardization movement of contemporary school reform presents tremendous challenges for educators interested in understanding and finding sustainable solutions to social inequity, oppression, and prejudices in the classroom (Kincheloe, 2008). Teachers contribute to the problem when they rely on a “banking system” of education (Freire, 2000) and allow students to graduate from our schools without possessing the necessary tools to question and help find solutions to social problems.

Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach where students are encouraged to question dominant notions of political, social, and economic assumptions, and form their own understandings of knowledge. One of the central notions of critical pedagogy is that students can create their own meaning around learning and teachers should facilitate that process rather than “force” meaning upon students (Giroux, 2011). Critical pedagogy requires educators to understand the political structure of the school, the community and how television, radio, popular music, movies, the Internet, youth subcultures, and the like affect people’s epistemologies in order to engage in culturally relevant teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Critical pedagogues consider the alternative bodies of knowledge produced by marginalized groups—the way power operates to construct identities and oppress certain groups, racism, gender bias, class bias, cultural bias,

heterosexism, and religious intolerance. When critical pedagogues understand and value the cultural experiences of their students and implement diverse teaching styles, they can shape curriculum that motivates students to become critical thinkers. Students who learn to question the societal status quo develop the drive to change their schools and communities to advance social justice. The goal of critical pedagogues is to educate students with love, respect and justice as guides, and to contribute to social change via mechanisms such as political advocacy, democratic involvement, and service learning. Critical pedagogues believe social justice should be at the center of all educational pursuits and grounded in love because when education is connected to the heart and mind, it launches new possibilities (hooks, 2000). According to hooks, educators' love (mixing care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication) can impact the outcome of their lessons. Love in education is the foundation of an education that pursues justice, equality, and the development of the mind. Freire (2000) believes that education should be aiming towards social change, and in order to do this, teachers must engage in reflective praxis. Freire stated,

One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (p. 51)

Critical pedagogues argue that the goal of schools should be to produce critically-minded citizens with the ability to question and challenge the world around them in order to contribute to a more democratic, inclusive and just society (Kincheloe, 2008). They

also stress that it is important for educators to understand the historical-sociocultural complexities of students' identities in order to provide a more equitable education (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2011). Yet critical pedagogy is challenging for teachers and principals, because educators tend to fall victim to curricular constraints, and they lack training that would otherwise allow them to consider critically pedagogic techniques that could more readily reach all students. Traditionally, educators push students to achieve academic goals without taking into consideration the complexities of their socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural background and how it affects their school performance (Salazar, 2013). To excel in the U.S. school system, students must comply with White, middle class standards which can alienate them from their language, culture, and their resources (Salazar, 2013). Critical pedagogues believe that teachers can help not only students of color, but also White students, assisting them in developing a deeper understanding of traditionally marginalized populations by taking into account the larger issues of race, socioeconomics, poverty, gender, sexual orientation, and language. Ultimately, educators can better understand the assets all students bring into the classroom by getting to know students' background, family, community and their extracurricular activities that contribute to building their identity.

Research Statement

My dissertation is based on the assumption that there are teachers who adopt and practice a pedagogy that challenges social inequities and systematic oppression (Freire, 2000). While there is significant literature about what critical pedagogy entails, there is less information about the actual teaching practices currently employed by critical

pedagogues working with adolescents. Specifically, information is lacking in the literature about how high school level critical pedagogues design lessons and employ teaching techniques that support existing curricular expectations while applying critical pedagogical principles to stimulate students to become change agents. For instance, Dimick (2016) affirmed that little has been published on this topic and calls for more research on educators applying critical pedagogies in the context of everyday life in schools. Dimick asserts that, “Additional research is needed to demonstrate diverse enactments of critical pedagogy in formal secondary education to examine the complex ways educators and youth interpret their experiences” (p. 835). The study I conducted addresses this gap.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to unveil critical pedagogical practices of five self-identified critical pedagogues from the Southern School of Art. Through my research, I examine the successes, challenges, and tensions of using critical pedagogy in the classroom and how teachers navigate these as they engage their students in a transformative educational experience in a five-and-half-week summer program. The research question is: *How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms?*

Defining Key Terms Central to My Study

Critical educator—a teacher who employs a dialogic method of instruction by posing questions, helping students to question and challenge the dominant order. Critical

educators learn with their students, by sharing the power in the classroom in pursuit of social justice (Freire, 1970).

Critical pedagogy—the use of dialogue and praxis as means to foster the ability to articulate and critique systems of meaning at work in texts and the world at large

Agency: a person’s ability to shape and control his or her own life by freeing the self from oppression of power.

Banking notion of education—The banking model of education (Freire, 2000) occurs when teachers perceive students as empty containers that need to be filled with pre-established bodies of knowledge. The narrowly defined “facts” and pieces of information that are transmitted are often disconnected from both teachers and students’ social realities. Students are thus treated as objects that are acted upon, rather than knowledgeable participants (Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom, 1999).

Critical thinking (critical consciousness/critical inquiry)—Not to be confused with what is traditionally thought of as higher order thinking skills (problem-solving skills), critical in this sense implies being able to understand, analyze, pose questions, and affect and effect the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape our lives (Leistyna et al., 1999).

Problem posing—when knowledge is formulated through questions as a catalyst for learning, where everyone, including the educator, teaches and learns from one another.

My Background as Researcher

My curiosity for this topic originates from my experiences as a public school Spanish and leadership teacher and social activist. As a cooperating teacher helping prepare service teachers from local universities, as a community leader through service clubs and organizations, and as an experienced educator, I do my utmost to contribute to improve public education inside and outside the classroom. I am also a teacher advocate, especially for those teachers who incorporate social justice objectives into their lessons. My journey as a graduate student has contributed to my interest in the role of critical pedagogy in the public classroom. Among others, Henry Giroux (2011) sparked my desire to investigate further the role of critical pedagogy and its impact in public education. He stated,

Critical Pedagogy locates discursive practices in a broader set of interrelations, but it analyzes and gives meaning to such relations by defining them within particular contexts constructed through the operations of power as articulated through the interaction among texts, teachers, and students. (p. 75)

Teaching Spanish, particularly to heritage language learning students, has allowed me to incorporate discursive practices that contribute to open dialogue, exploring the role of power in issues related to social justice, and helping students find their own voices as they gain knowledge about their own culture, language and history. Through dialogue, all students are able to analyze, critique, and reflect upon controversial topics. By incorporating real life events and students' lived experiences I facilitate critical interactions in the classroom. For example, in my teaching I have witnessed how critical pedagogical techniques encouraged students to take political action when facing injustice

or discrimination. Many social justice-driven projects have emerged from our class discussions. Students develop their curiosity and their research skills as they seek answers to local and global problems.

One project that stands out is the “*Las cajitas*” (Little boxes/sacred boxes) project that I read about in a book by Laura Rendón. Rendón (2009) discusses the purpose and implementation of cajitas by emphasizing the importance connecting academic intellectual knowledge to that of everyday life experiences. When this intersection occurs in the classroom, students are able to see how their work interacts with the real-life issues and problems in their lives. My use of cajitas to explore culture and identity within my classroom turned out to be an exciting and empowering experience.

The Spanish for Heritage students’ class had just completed the unit on “La experiencia migrante” (The Migrant Experience). Students read about the history of the Mexican people in the United States. They learned about migrant workers, the “bracero” program in the South West, documented and undocumented immigration and the struggles of immigrants when they arrived to the country with little or no English. Students went through the process of developing new vocabulary, acquiring new awareness of the history behind the facts and began to problematize their own experiences as they began to question and deconstruct their own reality. The cajitas project invited the students to select objects from their past and place them in a shoe box. They chose the objects according to the significance of their journey as children. Some students paid tribute to their families, honored loved ones who passed away, or made political statements. Students also composed a one to two-page essay to articulate the

meaning of their artistic and personal creations. They prepared an oral presentation and shared their stories with the class. In some presentations, students were moved to tears; others simply paused to reflect on their lives and realized for the first time the tremendous sacrifice their parents made. As a teacher and now as a researcher, I realized the tremendous significance of providing students with safe spaces to explore, reflect, share and discuss their lived experiences. Having open classroom discussions enables students to find their voice as they are able to explore their lived experiences and connect them to school, community and the world as they begin to identify oppression and social justice issues that need immediate attention.

In addition, my personal experience as a Chilean immigrant has helped me understand the struggles of many people. I have been through the challenges of acquiring the necessary tools to be able to strive in my new home, from learning the language to adjusting to the many cultural differences of the American way of life. I have become more sensitive to the needs of others, designing lessons that will stimulate dialogue and to motivate students to become activists for a more socially just society.

In 2011, I taught my first Spanish for heritage speakers' class. It was a life changing experience for me. I discovered that my students' experiences were distinctively different than mine. Many of these students came into the country without documentation and had to hide from mainstream society; many were unable to get legal employment, driver's licenses or a higher education. I began to question the reality of my Heritage students versus the reality of my novice Spanish language U.S. students. Why are they taking a Spanish language course? How can they understand the role of power in

our society? How can I expose my students to social justice? In what ways are teachers contributing to the disconnect our students have with political issues? How can teachers engage students in critical dialogue that can effectively contribute to a better understanding of equity issues affecting our country? Wearing the lenses of a public school educator, Latina immigrant, and social justice advocate, I became passionate about the role of critical pedagogy and the teachers who may actually use it to help promote social justice and transform the art of teaching. I believe that my role as a woman, Latina, researcher, and self-proclaimed critical pedagogue are crucial to the ways I mentor new Spanish teachers. As I continue to teach, help new teachers, take graduate courses and conduct research, I realize that much work needs to be done in order to truly contribute to the necessary changes in the art of teaching and learning. This is what drew me to this project of learning more about the teaching practices of critical pedagogues working with adolescents.

I am a teacher who is passionate about and deeply concerned about how teaching affects young minds and have worked with a variety of students and teachers in various educational contexts. As I immersed myself in this dissertation project, working with other teachers, I continued to carefully balance the freedom to shape curriculum with the restrictions imposed by the educational system that contributes to oppressive structures that restrict the manner in which we teach. Spanish is not considered a core course, required for graduating from high school; therefore, I have a little more freedom to create curriculum that encourages and helps build adolescent students' agency and its possibilities. As a researcher, I considered how my subjectivity and identity influenced

the way I viewed teachers. Throughout this study, I strived to interrogate the ways that my biases informed various parts of my study. My positionality as a Latina, feminist, Spanish teacher and critical pedagogue, forced me to reflect upon my journey as a teacher, student and researcher. I committed myself to assessing teachers' performances as accurately as possible. I struggled to position myself as an observer only because the teacher in me would want to take over and observe the events from a teacher's perspective. I had to check myself daily and be mindful of my role of researcher so that I could absorb the essence of the interactions taking place.

As I conducted observations, teacher and student interviews, I found myself comparing what I experienced teaching in public high schools with the Southern School of Art educational experience that served an elite group of students. I wondered why we do not have a similar educational set up for all youth. SSA was a transformative experience for me because it gave me different perspectives about teaching and energizing teaching practices that will have a long-lasting effect in the way I approach teaching and learning. I am thankful for all the teacher participants and of the students that contributed to a memorable research practice unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

Conclusion

When teachers use critical pedagogy techniques, students can have transformational experiences. Teachers can facilitate dialogue that teaches students to question the inequities in place and help them find their own answers. Tapping into alternative bodies of knowledge by traditionally marginalized groups, teachers can begin

to find meaningful answers to social issues. My 28-plus years of public school teaching experience have helped shape the way I perceive education. Yet, what I learned through this study has been invaluable. Throughout my study, I realized that the teacher and students' narratives spoke to me in various ways—confirming many preconceived notions, and dismantling others. I believe this experience will contribute meaning and depth to the literature about implementing critical pedagogy in the secondary classroom.

CHAPTER II

TENETS OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Educators face a variety of challenges when teaching to pursue a democratic education for all students. Teachers and students are experiencing schools as authoritarian and antidemocratic when dealing with marginalized groups and individuals (Giroux, 2011). Schools prioritize standardized tests and traditional social values. School knowledge comes primarily from dominant cultural, class, and gender groups, consequently schools are reproducing social inequities found in the dominant culture (Kincheloe, 2008). As a result, researchers must continue to study the ways in which educators implement critical pedagogy techniques in the classroom for social justice. I drew upon research literature to develop a rationale for the study. I illustrated both the importance of the study and the limited existing literature on the research problem. I reviewed the body of literature that focuses on critical pedagogy and how it is implemented in the classroom and the challenges in teaching critical pedagogy at the high school level. The articles and textbooks I have reviewed clearly present some evolving themes that I later explore in more detail. I have selected studies where critical pedagogy has been implemented in order to help answer my research question: How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms? The study I conducted in The Southern School of Art seeks to add to the growing conversation regarding the aims of critical pedagogical teaching practices.

Critical pedagogy, according to Kincheloe (2008) and Steinberg (2010), requires that educators study power and privilege through a multicultural perspective. Foley, Morris, Gounari, and Agostinone-Wilson (2015) explain that critical pedagogy draws upon the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory of the 1920s and focuses on issues of power and domination, providing a deeper understanding of the manner that power and domination influence schooling. Teachers who use critical pedagogy make an effort to expose the school's role in sorting students. Critical pedagogy unveils issues of equity in educating diverse populations. Critical pedagogy examines issues of equity, promotes social justice, and rejects notions of meritocracy (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2001).

Critical pedagogy opens up spaces of possibility where dialogue, democratic participation, creativity, and Freire's never ending cycle of action/reflection/action can exist (Freire, 2000). Critical pedagogy is grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equity. It allows educators to discover what human beings are capable of achieving and the role social, cultural, and political constructions play in shaping human identity. It also helps us see the relationship between community and school and the ways power operates to influence schooling. Furthermore, critical pedagogy encourages educators to rethink a deep conceptualization of how teachers and students might relate knowledge to their world, and the ways schooling affects the lives of students. Kincheloe (2008) writes, "In this context, educators deal not only with questions of schooling, curriculum, and educational policy but also with social justice and human possibility" (p. 7).

Critical pedagogy helps unveil the role of power and agency in education as well as culturally relevant, engaging practices that help foster the development of dialogue that shapes students' and teachers' perspectives. I have identified four major themes in the literature on critical pedagogy: understanding the historical-sociocultural complexities, the power of the arts, funds of knowledge, and trust and dialogue. These themes shed light on the key concepts of critical pedagogy and challenge the views of many educators who believe that pedagogy is a synonym for teaching; more so, it is about the relationship between teaching and learning and how together they lead to growth in knowledge and understanding through meaningful practice (Loughran, 2013). These themes provide educators with a solid foundation to base their approaches to critical pedagogy.

After thorough research into the complexities of the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, these four themes or tenets encompass the core characteristics that critical pedagogues must adopt when implementing critical pedagogical teaching techniques in the classroom. I am going to explain each tenet first, and discuss its significance for my study in the following sections.

Understanding the Historical-Sociocultural Complexities of Students and Teachers

A culturally relevant pedagogy relates to critical pedagogy because teachers who employ such pedagogical techniques can assist students to not only achieve academically but also become critical thinkers who demonstrate cultural competence, while being able to understand and critique the injustices and inequities of their world.

Critical pedagogues must develop a clear understanding of the historical and sociocultural complexities they bring to their teaching practices as well as those of their students. From a critical pedagogy perspective, students' backgrounds should inform and facilitate teaching and learning; they should influence the design of meaningful lessons in which the student can have an active role of questioning, researching, peer-teaching, discussing and contributing to class dynamic. Critical pedagogues study broad sociocultural issues, bringing attention to how poverty, race, social class, and language interact with local practices in teaching and learning, as well as in the everyday lives of students, families, and educators (Faltis & Abedi, 2013). In order to fulfill the core tenet of critical pedagogy, which is to humanize students through educational practices, educators need to scrutinize issues of racism, classism, agency, sexism, poverty, community, and language (Lopez, 2011; Nieesz, 2007; Salazar, 2013).

In considering the importance for educators to develop a clear understanding of students' historical-sociocultural complexities, some education scholars highlight how teachers are able to make their lessons more meaningful for students (Faltis & Abedi, 2013). These scholars assert that teachers should use what they term "extraordinary pedagogies," which, encompass "larger sociocultural issues, bringing attention to how poverty, race, social class, and language interact with local practices in teaching and learning, and in everyday lives of families, educators, children, and youth" (p. VII). Educators who attempt to understand their students' background recognize the importance of the historical, social and cultural perspectives students possess. Scholars explain that educators who establish open dialogue and support culturally relevant

methods are able to develop a dynamic relationship among home/community, culture, and school culture (Bartlett, 2005; Cammarotta & Romero, 2006; Faltis, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995). According to these scholars, educators who develop an understanding and respect for students' background and language are able to maximize learning. They are able to connect their lessons to students' lives.

Ladson-Billings (1995) conducted a study that reveals the importance of understanding the historical-sociocultural complexities of the students as well as authentic dialogue (when students are in the mind set of discovery). As a single investigator, she worked with a group of eight teachers in a small, less than 3,000 student, and predominantly African-American, low-income elementary school district in Northern California. Ladson-Billings (1995) made critical pedagogy a central part of her investigation by researching how others used culturally relevant pedagogy and how it relates to social justice.

Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that culturally relevant pedagogy helps analyze teacher-student interpersonal contexts and students' value for their cultural identity. When using culturally relevant pedagogy, critical pedagogues can guide students to learn and appreciate their cultural backgrounds and develop critical views of themselves and their world. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), it is fundamental to assist students in doing so as they critically engage in questioning the inequities and injustices of their world:

A next step for posing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge

inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469)

The parents helped select the teacher participants for the study; the parents' criteria for teaching excellence included being accorded respect by the teacher, students' enthusiasm toward school and academic tasks, and students' attitudes toward themselves and others. Teaching experience was a big factor in successfully teaching students in this community. Teachers with more years of experience and with more professional development experience had more success in the classroom. Participant teachers possessed 12 to 40 years of teaching experience, most of it with African-American students. Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that teachers who are culturally responsive use dialogue in assessing knowledge, use their title to facilitate learning, demonstrate an ethic of caring, show affection, show concern for the impact of their work on their students, and take personal accountability even when confronted with administrators' lack of support. In this case study, dialogue was critical in assessing knowledge claims. The significance of caring is present throughout the body of literature related to critical pedagogy. In this particular study, Ladson-Billings explains, "The teachers were not all demonstrative and affectionate toward the students. Instead, their common thread of caring was their concern for the implications their work had on their students' lives, the welfare of community, and the unjust social arrangements" (p. 474). Teachers in this study demonstrated an ethic of personal accountability in the types of pedagogical stands they took. Many of these teachers discussed how they were defying administrative mandates that did not benefit their students, and others gave examples of actions they

took to engage in pedagogical practices more consistent with their beliefs and values.

Ladson-Billings (1995) articulated,

For example, one teacher was convinced that the school district's mandated reading program was inconsistent with what she was learning about literacy teaching/learning from a critical perspective. She decided to write a proposal to the school board asking for experimental status for a literacy approach she wanted to use in her classroom. Her proposal was buttressed by current research in literacy and would not cost the district any more than the proposed program. Ultimately, she was granted permission to conduct her experiment, and its success allowed other teachers to attempt it in subsequent years. (p. 474)

Although understanding the historical-socioeconomic complexities of students and teachers may facilitate teaching, critical pedagogues must also consider the challenges that confront students beyond their communities and their class status (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2011; P. S. Howard, 2013; Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Critical pedagogy facilitates the exploration of biases from teachers and students. T. C. Howard (2013) argued,

Where some scholars examine cultural, structural, racial, and identity variables in evaluating how Black males see school, others contend that local-level classroom experiences play a much larger role than what is reflected in literature, particular teacher attitudes and perceptions. (p. 68)

Culturally relevant pedagogy focuses on the multiple perspectives students and teachers must develop as they engage in critical dialogue. Interpersonal interaction must exist in order to move from theory to practice and into meaningful change that would have the potential to affect the social order (Lynn & Jennings, 2009).

Critical pedagogy can also intersect with promoting nonviolence in the classroom. Chubbuck and Zembylas (2011) conducted a case study of the experiences of a white novice teacher at an urban school in the Midwestern United States as she struggled to formulate nonviolent and socially just teaching practices. The teacher tried to conceptualize and promote nonviolence among the students in context of her efforts to enact critical pedagogy. By understanding the role of racism, classism, poverty and historical background of her students, the teacher was successfully implementing a curriculum of nonviolence in her classroom. Chubbuck and Zembylas (2011) argue, “Because of Sara’s efforts, some of her students also embraced and understanding of nonviolence at both local and global levels, as well as in their growing sense of their common humanity” (p. 270). Teachers can productively use their position of power to foster nonviolence and create greater justice in their classroom and school. Teachers can also use their power and understanding of historical complexities to challenge standardized testing that some identify as tools of injustice towards students and faculty (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2011). Culturally relevant critical pedagogy facilitates students’ less resistant approach to academic challenges, motivating them to learn and take responsibility for their own learning while fostering students’ cultural backgrounds as an asset to the learning process (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Niesz’s (2007) study showcased teachers connecting their subject matter to other disciplines, and extending it to the students’ home and community in order to stop the reproduction of social injustice in schools. Teachers’ biases and the use of critical pedagogy presented complexities that have been minimally explored. Niesz (2007)

excavated beneath the surface of teacher subjectivities and the characteristics that may resemble critical pedagogy. Teachers participate in voluntary professional developments and create teacher networks that are driven by educator subjectivities, involving their heritage, hobbies and historical backgrounds (Niesz, 2007). Since teacher networks provide resources, discourses and social capital for the cultural production of school change, it facilitated students and parents' engagement. There are two social justice projects presented in the study and teacher networks are explored as discursive resources for the projects. Students are motivated to get involved making a difference in the community but the extent of critical practice will depend on the preparation and readiness of the teacher. According to Niesz,

Ms. Berman's identity as a Jewish woman was also very salient in her classroom, and she often shared aspects of this identity with her students. Particularly striking to me were the connections that she made between important class themes of oppression, resistance, and voice throughout history (which were usually discussed with respect to the African American experience) and the historical experience of Jews worldwide. She seemed to make these linkages from a personal place in addition to pedagogical one. (p. 341)

The teachers in this study designed projects that reflect their concerns for social justice and equality. Almost all of the learning activities in an eighth-grade class were related to the interdisciplinary service-learning project titled, "Do our voices count?" This particular project engaged students in an interdisciplinary investigation that included a wide range of learning activities in the English Language Arts classroom. The students' work was framed by an exploration of community, democracy, and organization for change, as well as the metaphor of "voices" (Niesz, 2007). For instance, the class studied

African American voices in literature and in history, with particular focus on the eras of slavery/antebellum/reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement. The students explored how and when the African American voices “counted and made a difference” (p. 338) from the role of spirituals during the period of slavery to the popular beliefs about how to get voices heard during the Civil Rights Movement.

Students also studied their own communities in order to advocate for change in various sites, buildings, houses, and business. Students investigated their city’s democratic processes in collaboration with local community activists. Ultimately students organized to call on local political representatives to address public safety issues of abandoned housing, cars, to lesser extent, guns, drugs, and gangs. They also participated in artistic expression connecting the themes covered in the unit presented by the teacher. Art reflected their history, sociocultural views and political expression. Educators, who feel prepared to adjust the curriculum to fit innovated ideas in order to promote social justice, are able to do it.

Another teacher from Caver Middle School, an ESOL teacher, who considered herself an “activist” (Niesz, 2007) was committed to serving English Language Learners in Philadelphia’s immigrant and refugee communities. Her lively lessons elicited students’ voices and perspectives, which she integrated into learning activities. Through activities, assignments, and discussions, students were consistently urged to connect their readings and their writing to their history and their lives. As a culminating project in collaboration with the art teacher, the class built a tile mosaic about world oppression based on the Wall of Remembrance at the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. Their

mosaic dealt with the Cambodian Holocaust and racial oppression in the U.S. in addition to the World War II Holocaust (p. 339). It is important to mention these examples in order to illustrate the manner in which critical pedagogues can draw from their own subjectivities to enact critical pedagogy with their students.

In other words, it is not sufficient to understand the historical- sociocultural complexities teachers and students bring to the classroom; critical pedagogues must also consider the challenges that confront students beyond their communities and their class status. Educators also need to identify more teaching practices and pedagogies that foster the creation of spaces that can facilitate students and teachers' appreciation of historical- sociocultural complexities. The second tenet of critical pedagogy that I address is:

The Power of the Arts

Arts in critical pedagogy plays a vital role in disrupting the power of neoliberalism and neoconservatism; this idea has been stressed by influential theorists and researchers such as Maxine Greene (1995, 2000, 2009), Elliot Eisner (2004, 2009), and Norman Denzin (2010). The arts can broaden and deepen education in ways that cross class, race, gender and ethnicity (Louis, 2006; Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013). However, some researchers and educators argue that it is not the arts themselves, but the pedagogy that is used with the arts that truly broadens and deepens learning (Stovall, 2006; Yaakoby, 2013).

Upitis (2011) defines the arts to include the fine and performing arts as: "painting, sculpting, writing poetry, playing an instrument, singing, dancing, acting, creating mixed media productions, and film-making. Indeed, the arts are much broader than this

definition” (p. 1). Each of these arts activities engages the learner wholly, meaning intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Some examples of fine arts in the critical classroom focus on critical performative pedagogy, hip-hop media production, digital storytelling, critical literacy, creative writing, community history murals, devise or applied theatre, painting, drawing and investigative journalism and photography (Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013; Louis, 2006; Stovall, 2006).

Louis (2006) enacted critical pedagogy, via critical performative pedagogy, in an attempt to critique and resolve students’ communication-based obstacles; it opened new paths for helping nonnative English speaking students use the English language. Louis (2006) explains that critical performative pedagogy can be viewed through the delicate relationship between text and performance that has historically occupied oral interpretation-performance studies scholarship. Drama and the adaptation of Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed served as the framework for Louis’s (2006) critical performative English as a second language course. The essence of the theater of the oppressed pedagogy involves both a collection of performance representing people’s struggles located in educational places and an embodied performance of executing social actions that relates to education.

According to Louis (2006), students were encouraged to recognize the performativity of language and to rehearse communicative action in response to relevant language obstacles they identify. Louis (2006) argues, “Every act of schooling exposes a culturally constructed performance site that encourages some bodily practices, while discouraging others” (p. 341). Even though the ESL (English as a Second Language)

program operated within an agency committed to improving the lives of immigrants and refugees, its traditional, banking-style pedagogy viewed students as malleable, passive recipients of language instruction (Freire, 2000). Particularly because ESL students attached highly individualized investments to their English language schooling; the program's pedagogical format suggested a disembodied "template of sociality" that portrayed student's use of English as standardized and universal (Louis, 2006, p. 342). Independently from the everyday, material contexts in which students made use of English, the ESL program's emphasis on structural training unfortunately erased immigrant and refugee students' bodies (Louis, 2006). The observations Louis conducted of ESL students outside the classroom revealed the tension between the program's preferred student body and students' actual identities. Louis stated,

During their nightly, fifteen-minute breaks, as well as before and after class, students frequently told stories about seemingly mundane communication obstacles they encountered while interacting with native English speakers. They told stories about landlords who would not respond to their tenants' requests, grocery clerks who relentlessly stared at immigrant customers, and employers who belittled immigrant employees by assuming they were ignorant of basic workplace information. (p. 342)

Teachers of the program did little to incorporate these students' real world experiences into the curriculum.

Louis (2006) proposed recovering the performing body through critical performative pedagogy focused on discussion, performance, and analysis of students' communication problems during the first half of the class and a rapid-fire, grammar drill sequence during the second half. He relied on the Theater of the Oppressed during the

performance component of class, as a means of embodied, ethnographic investigation into students' uses for English. Initially, students used Boal's image theatre to build and analyze group vivid images of a selected language obstacle, followed by a forum theatre scene that rehearsed solutions to it. Louis (2006) argued "Later in the semester, students moved directly from small group discussion into staging of a forum scene. During both sequences, the forum scene became the practical and concrete means for generating possibilities for communicative action to language obstacles" (p. 343). Students were able to express themselves, embody their performances and develop their critical voices. Louis, (2006) explained, "All participants of this pedagogy are at risk. For teachers, doing performative pedagogy consciously displays their embodied identities, even if those identities are marginalized by students or the larger institutional context" (p. 349). Louis' study clearly showed how students experienced risk by taken chances, expressing their lived experiences in front of an audience, and by uncertainty, as an unscripted process which participants were encouraged to develop as they found and used their own critical voices and bodies.

The arts can open paths for students to express themselves using various resources that inspire and transcend to impacting their school and community. Social justice education can be reflected in the arts. Blending the arts in education with critical pedagogy generates an approach characterized by blurred boundaries that impact the viewer because of its ability to convey powerful messages. Arts in education in the form of art production, social critique, scientific inquiry, and activism are some of the most recognize means for promoting social change. It is an approach grounded in peculiarities

of the local community that attends to how power and culture work to enhance or limit human potential (Graham, 2007).

Faltis and Abedi (2013) focused their attention on the role art education can have in promoting critical thinking and challenging the status quo. They refer to “arts-based scholarship and pedagogy” as critical to the ways in which teachers make education meaningful by engaging the students, school, and community. According to Faltis and Abedi, “school, community, and public arts-based activities are a valuable way for disrupting the deficit scripts and for promoting more socially aware and socially just citizens” (p. x). The arts involve tapping into the individual creativity and self-expression of the student. According to this study, arts in education contribute to expressing suppressed feelings of inequity, particularly for students who feel marginalized because of their race, gender preference, social economic status or place of origin, in schools and communities.

Critical pedagogues such as Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor (2013), advocate for arts in education and multicultural-multilingual learning for all. They examined the role of the arts in education, especially its effect on minoritized students (groups that are different in race, religious creed, nation of origin, sexuality, and gender and as a result of social constructs have less power or representation compared to other members or groups in society) within the context of social research (p. 244). Educators who embrace art education are able to find new pathways for exercising agency to help students, particularly minoritized students to find their own voices. Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor (2013) argue that critical educators who try to incorporate youth- centered art

projects in their curriculums regularly, are negotiating cross-cultural tensions, and by using new modes of communication, such as teaching through language immersion critical pedagogies, are able to see the results reflected in the inclusive nature of the final work.

Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor (2013) also highlighted the influence of the arts in the critical classroom not just for minoritized (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2011), but also for majoritized students,

The arts in education can assist majoritized student populations in decentring their privileged positionality, in seeing the world from different perspectives including the impact of social dominance and structural inequities on minoritized communities, and their own relationships to those systems of power as majoritized people. (Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013, p. 248)

They remind us that arts-based pedagogy is good for all students because of its inclusive nature, arts-based pedagogy assist teachers in generating new paths for all students to explore the world from different angles.

The arts in the critical classroom help stimulate various approaches to teaching and learning, including hip-hop media production, digital storytelling, critical literacy analysis, and creative writing. Also, critical caring (as despair turns into hope, hatred into love, and doubt into trust) extends from the classroom to the community, through the use of history murals, theatre, investigative journalism and photography (Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013). The studies conducted by Chappell and Cahnmann-Taylor (2013) share the goal of supporting teachers and students in developing their identities as artists, in constructing creative communities, exploring cultural questions and problems,

and producing public art works that truly addresses equity and social justice issues for communities, particularly “minoritized” communities (p. 255). There are other forms of art/pedagogy that do work well with various students, for instance nontraditional types of music.

Stovall (2006) addresses the question: “Can hip-hop, as an element of popular culture, be utilized as a central theme in developing critical pedagogy in secondary social studies curriculum?” (p. 585). In considering how hip-hop has been criticized in the popular media for its controversial lyrics and presuppositions, this study positions hip-hop as a transformative element in the development of critical teaching and thinking. Stovall (2006) drew from a facilitator-researcher’s experience in several workshops conducted in thematic units conducted in a high school social studies class. He referred to himself as a facilitator in the context of critical teaching (p. 586). The workshops took place in a Chicago public high school. The class was composed of 19 African American and Latino/Latina students. The sessions discussed and engaged activities based on hip-hop lyrics. From reflective writing to historical research, songs were used to provide historical and social context (p. 589). Stovall (2006) argued that as an alternative to situations that are depersonalized and sometimes dehumanizing, “the infusion of hip-hop culture can provide the context for students to develop a critical lens in approaching subject matter and its relevance to their daily lives” (p. 589). He insists that hip-hop culture, as relevant to the lives of many high school students, can provide a liaison to ideas and everyday jobs that promote critical understanding.

This critical approach of art in education represents an attempt by educators and scholars in any field to move toward more socially just aims and pedagogy. The arts can broaden and deepen education for all students by tapping into individual creativity and self-expression. This critical approach can cross lines of race, gender and ethnicity as well as challenge the status quo. The third tenet in critical pedagogy that I address is:

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge refer to the “hidden” treasures of home and community resources that students bring into the classroom (Moll, 2011). Moll asserted that funds of knowledge allow critical pedagogues to gain a thorough understanding of students. The literature on funds of knowledge suggests that educators must draw upon students’ backgrounds knowledge and experiences to enhance learning. Studies have suggested that drawing on the experiences that students have accumulated in their households with siblings, peers, friends, communities, and parents are not only valuable to students’ lives, but can assist teachers in understanding the ways in which these experiences can be practically and meaningfully connected to classroom curriculum (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011).

The notion of funds of knowledge helps educators understand the value of a sociocultural approach to teaching and learning. Moll (2011) contended, “Existing classroom practices underestimate and constrain what Latino and other children are able to display intellectually” (p. 6). A funds of knowledge framework helps teachers conduct an ethnographic analysis of students’ communities and families. In Moll’s work, home investigations revealed an abundant knowledge that schools do not know about and

therefore do not use when teaching academic skills (p. 3). Moll (2011) suggested that educators should intentionally draw upon these funds of knowledge and make connections to classroom curriculum. In fact, a key component of the funds of knowledge framework identifies what unique experiences students and their families possess and later link them to instruction. Moll (2011) explained, “We believe that a meaning-centered model . . . allows bilingual students to take full advantage of their first language abilities, and to surpass the limits set by their more limited knowledge of their second language” (p. 3).

Several researchers (Amaro-Jimenez & Semingson, 2011; Rodriguez, 2013; Barton & Tan, 2009) approach the topic of funds of knowledge as a vehicle to develop better understanding for what students bring into the classroom. Students’ personal stories and narratives help shape the nature of the interactions that take place in the academic setting. Power and agency in education seem to motivate many of the findings of the studies. Funds of knowledge focuses on the role of power and agency in students’ non-classroom learning settings. Rodriguez (2013) argued that, “Funds of Knowledge are defined as the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge, and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 89). Each student possesses funds of knowledge that provides teachers with a wealth of resources that can help guide instructional practices and curricular content. According to Rodriguez (2013),

The concern of critical pedagogues is about creating learning environments that are more accepting and inclusive, as well as more effective in producing academic

outcomes among students that prepare them for future educational and developmental undertakings. (p. 94)

The cultural wealth eventually bridges the cultural differences, in other words, the cultural and linguistic knowledge serves as a path to developing the skills that the students may lack to create a direct connection between home life and school learning.

There are three critical pedagogy techniques related to funds of knowledge that are present throughout these studies, Amaro-Jimenez and Semingson (2011), Barton and Tan (2009), and Rodriguez (2013) which educators may find helpful. First, by engaging students as co-constructors of knowledge, they begin to seek a more profound understanding of academic knowledge. This technique helps instill the desire to extend their academic knowledge through funds of knowledge. Second, by acknowledging and supporting the use of funds of knowledge in the classroom, students begin to value their multiple funds of knowledge coming from their families and their communities. Third, by transporting students' academic knowledge from the classroom to the family and the community, students and educators can begin to experience classroom transformation by the ways students engage and perform in the classroom. Funds of knowledge provide an effective framework for teachers and students to actively extend their agency beyond school walls.

Rodriguez (2013) acknowledged that

even as individual students are charged with specific responsibilities for co-creating a narrative and presentation of their community-based issues, the sense of interdependence that replaces competition among students further reflects and reinforces the double-democracy principles. (p. 96)

Art can assist all educators in designing more significant lessons with students' creative input. Rodriguez (2013) provides examples of teachers who effectively engage students' funds of knowledge that can impact social justice in the classroom. For instance, students in her study used clay animation visual arts as a tool to express themselves through storytelling about their experiences. This is a democratic pedagogical approach in teaching practices that provides room for teachers and students to learn from one another in their cooperative pursuit of knowledge (p. 96). In Rodriguez's study, students used various skills to prepare their presentations and argue their position about various topics. Consequently, they were resorting to their cultural and personal assets to convey ideas to their audience and creating meaningful dialogue about issues related to inequity and social justice in their community.

The power of expression through students' own funds of knowledge was exemplified by students' changes in attitudes and shifting perspectives, as they made critical connections with and posed critical questions about their world. Researchers such as Rodriguez (2013) and Barton and Tan (2009) argue that educators must acknowledge diversity among students and embrace these differences, and to treat the students accordingly as individuals.

Funds of knowledge, discourses (conversations of ideas students brought from their home cooking practices), and hybrid space (physically: transforming the classroom space, politically: shifts in power dynamics and pedagogically: students' roles were changed, involved in planning all the lessons) emerged as key findings from a study by Barton and Tan (2009), conducted at a low-income urban middle school in a sixth-grade

class. The pedagogical practices in a science unit on food and nutrition supported students' everyday knowledge and practices while also aligning with curricular mandates. The study revealed different types of funds of knowledge that students brought to science learning, such as birthday celebrations, everyday nutrition, family traditions, food preparation while their parents work, etc. (p. 51). Barton and Tan (2009) stressed the importance of acknowledging the diverse funds of knowledge that are grounded in students' relationships and experiences in and out of school. Consequently, they stressed, "it is crucial to examine how these diverse funds of knowledge are mediated through an attendant Discourse, or ways of being, talking, and writing that must occur in the right places, the right times, and the right ways" (p. 52). Barton and Tan (2009) referred to three views on hybrid space in critical pedagogy:

A supportive scaffold that links traditionally marginalized funds of knowledge and Discourses to academic funds and Discourse; hybrid space as a navigational space in gaining competency and expertise to negotiate differing discourse communities; and finally, hybrid space where different funds and Discourses coalesce to destabilize and expand the boundaries of official school Discourse. (p. 52)

Acts of creating hybrid spaces, for instance transforming the classroom into a large kitchen, Discourses and identities are always political and of the high risk for those students whose knowledge, Discourse, and identities are positioned as less important by traditional schooling. Barton and Tan (2009) explained that hybrid space sheds light on science learning because it offers a way of understanding how learning science entails learning to negotiate the multiple texts, Discourses, and knowledge available inside a community as it is about learning specific content and processes (p. 52). Students can

make use of their home and community knowledge and contribute to the planning of meaningful lessons that connect science to their world. The students in the study actively participated in learning by cooking nutritious food related to the science class objectives, discussing family traditional dishes and making connections with diverse points of view (p. 58). Barton and Tan (2009) attributed the success of the unit on food to the use of funds of knowledge and Discourse and by allowing students to author new hybrid spaces that supported their out of school experiences with in school expectations. Barton and Tan (2009) described the significance of the study, “We found that such acts of authoring helped to shift both the breadth and depth of student participation. We also found the students often used the funds in combinations that are thoughtful and strategic” (p. 68). Students became increasingly engaged when the teacher invited such funds in the discussions, reading and writing activities as well as content-specific tasks.

In summary, funds of knowledge are resources students bring to the classroom from home and community. These valuable resources aid critical pedagogues who intentionally draw from students’ experiences to enhance learning, connecting them to classroom curriculum. Funds of knowledge help connect the cultural or linguistic knowledge students have to the lessons at hand, helping them develop new skills, and create more direct connections between home and school learning. Ultimately, by focusing on funds of knowledge, critical educators have the opportunity to connect learning experiences that can impact equity in education that can expand from the classroom to the community. The fourth tenet of critical pedagogy that I address is:

Trust Dialogue and Critical Thinking

The use of this combination of approaches from critical theory, dialogue and the discourse of possibility is a process of knowledge production, based upon a philosophy of dynamic (and always-conflicting) interplay among beings, objects, and contexts, as well as belief and human perception (Ott & Burghardt, 2013). Freire (2000) defined dialogue as “the encounter between [humans], mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (p. 80). At its broadest, the concept of dialogue represents the dialectical process of moving from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. In other words, we must have a thesis (original idea) and the antithesis (the opposite idea) and then we can find synthesis (new concrete understanding). Freire presented dialogue as a pedagogical process, in which teachers and students actively pursue learning through discussion and debate of sociopolitical realities. He also included distinct characteristics that must exist in order for dialogue to take place. Because dialogue is “an existential necessity” among women and men who name the world and it is an act of creation. It cannot exist without love, faith, hope and humility for the world and for the people (pp. 88-89). In addition, Freire (2000) included the requirement of critical thinking in order for meaningful dialogue to exist. He specifically stated, “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (p. 93). Freire (2000) argued that educators should reject a “banking” model of education, in which the teacher “owns” knowledge and “deposits” it in students. Instead, he promoted a “problem-posing” method in which teachers and students learn together, through dialogue. Problem-posing

education depends, then, on praxis and knowledge that includes dialogue and a revised relationship between teacher and student.

Bartlett (2005) conducted a study in Brazil with three nongovernmental literacy programs inspired by Freire's philosophy. Particular attention was given to three complicated issues that continue to trouble popular or critical educators everywhere: understanding the meaning of dialogue, transforming traditional teacher-student relations, and incorporating local knowledge into the classroom. Teachers created conditions of friendship and trust that encouraged students to bring their experiences of social problems into the classroom. Consequently, they were able to establish more intimate relationships with the students. Bartlett (2005) stated,

NGO teacher Neide told me she worked to create friendship with students through dialogue, with confidence. If you join them, become their equal through conversation and jokes, they start to confide in you and tell you their problems. And as teachers, sometimes we tell our problems to them. I love it when I'm conversing with students and they tell me, "Today we didn't have anything to eat." Would they have courage to tell the public school teacher this? They wouldn't! But they'll tell me, "Today I didn't eat. Today my husband beat me." (p. 351)

The emphasis on friendship, created through inviting dialogue, served multiple purposes. First, it allowed teachers to avoid positioning themselves as "the expert" and encouraged them to bring out personal stories from students, thus partially meeting Freire's call for both dialogue (in the sense of discussion) and the inclusion of students' experiences in the classroom. Second, it attended to the students' sense of shame over their reading, writing, and, in particular, speaking abilities. The students felt embarrassed not to have developed basic literacy skills that would help them communicate and interpret the work

presented to them. Participant educators in the study saw students' silence as a political obstacle, preventing them from speaking out against injustices. Teachers also saw silence as an obstacle to students' development as full people. Teachers tried to work against speech shame by giving conversation center space in their classroom activities. Through dialogue, the teachers worked to foster students' sense of having something worthy to say and then articulating it. Bartlett (2005) suggested that when students are able to speak while the teacher listens, teachers begin to change the traditional speech-class hierarchy. This practice also removes authority from teacher (who is usually white and middle-class) and gives oratory agency to subaltern groups (groups of people of color) (Bartlett, 2005).

The body of literature I consulted explains how dialogue may assist critical pedagogues in planning engaging lessons. The text, the criticism of the text, and the classroom conversation surrounding both the text and formal criticism of it, are deeply intertwined in critical dialogue. Many educators acknowledge the influences of media and popular culture in students' interpretations of the world. Critical pedagogues can use these influences to bring critical dialogue into their classroom (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008; McPherron & Schneider, 2005; Ott & Burgchard, 2013).

Teachers in many disciplines now integrate media and popular culture into their classrooms. They are able to bring relevant dialogue to their classes as they enact critical pedagogy and address students' preconceived notions using text of popular culture, novels, films, television programs, music, and the like. The text may serve as a tool for dialogue and discourse of possibility only when it allows students to question, exposing

problematic systems of oppression. Ott and Burghardt (2013) complicate matters further when they argued, “All of this suggests that the empowering and democratizing capacity of a dialogic pedagogy/politics is shaped to some extent by the very character of the texts selected by teachers for curricular inclusion” (p. 18). Although educators are limited with their selection of texts to design their lessons, they have opportunities to criticize texts in an open forum with their classes.

Critical thinking becomes much more important to critical pedagogy when engaging students in everyday class dialogue (Ott & Burghardt, 2013, p. 19). Critical pedagogy aspires to transform the classroom practice to become both pedagogical and political. Authentic dialogue entails a reciprocal exchange between teachers and students, utilizing an “interrogative framework” (Giroux, 2011) to engage students’ lived experiences in the production of knowledge and understanding. Additionally, Giroux (2011) stated that critical dialogue helps teachers and students not just to think critically and act as informed agents in the classroom; it also provides teachers and students the skills and knowledge to expand their ability to question. For example, in explaining the impact of having critical dialogue in the classroom, Giroux (2011) contended, “It forges critique and agency through a language of skepticism and possibility” (p. 172). Also, he insisted that teachers and students must develop a relationship of trust, so they can constantly negotiate theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and ultimately social change.

Ott and Burghardt (2013) believed that rhetorical and media critics, through the practice of dialogic criticism, have a vital contribution to meet the goals of critical

pedagogy. They presented examples for educators to follow in implementing teaching practices that invite students to participate in meaningful dialogue. They explained that teachers need to set the stage for open-ended questioning, creating an inviting environment for discussion, where students can develop trust for the teacher and feel safe to express themselves. One way to do so is for teachers to position themselves vulnerably by sharing personal experiences (p. 178).

Critical pedagogy entails dialogical practices so students can become active citizens, challenging injustices in their schools and in the world around them. The processes of dialogue and reflection are crucial to meeting educational goals, as well as their historical, cultural and social experiences (Ott & Burghardt, 2013). Focusing on critical thinking and its role in critical dialogue is essential for educators, not only to recognize that it teaches us about the world, but also to acknowledge that it teaches us how to interact with it. Ott and Burghardt (2013) explained, “Criticism models philosophies of communication, processes of knowing, and ways of being with and in the world” (p. 29). They also defined critical inquiry as “artistic” and “advocacy,” because only when critical inquiry is a dialogic encounter with in, a much wider and always unfolding variety of discourses involve. It has the potential to become text, critical commentary of the text, and classroom dialogue about the text. Ultimately, the goal for critical pedagogues is to help students build critical thinking skills they can apply in and outside the classroom walls. Critical thinking skills are essential for critical dialogue and critical pedagogy to exist.

Lynn and Jennings (2009) stated, “There are few studies that have explicitly examined the links between critical pedagogy and the scholarship on Black teachers” (p. 173). There is a need to understand how Black teachers prepare Black children (and others) to become highly literate and culturally competent social critics. In order to understand the contribution of Black critical pedagogues, Lynn and Jennings (2009) conducted a study during an entire school year in a small working class African-American community of South Central Los Angeles. Two African American male teachers agreed to participate, one from a middle school and one from the high school. These teachers met the criterion of commitment to making certain that African-American children could attain academic success while instilling in them a critique of social inequity and desire for social change (p. 183). Their journeys in the school system had been difficult, from having the wrong teaching assignments to not having a classroom. The teachers’ experiences helped shape the manner in which they chose to conduct their classes. They instilled trust in their students and, through dialogue, they were able to facilitate serious debates about the best approaches to living, for example how to manage money, how to research their environment and how to peacefully deal with social justice issues. Both teachers used their students’ lives as texts through which to build curriculum in the classroom context. For instance, the math teacher situated his math instruction with the Black experience in the U.S.A. and helped his students understand how math can be used to improve their lives. Also, he used open dialogue in the classroom to discuss issues of equity in the broader society. In this study, the teachers engaged their students

in various types of classroom activities by using storytelling techniques and critical dialogue (p. 178).

While both teachers did not experience immediate academic success with their students, they did “tap into their minds and spirits” (p. 189). According to Lynn and Jennings (2009), eventually, students wanted to discuss and help fix the major problems in their community; they were excited about using numbers as a way to construct their own lives. They were no longer passive receivers or observers of the information presented to them. Another important point of this study is the reality students face when they leave school and how it affects them. In this particular area of Los Angeles, these students were witnesses to not only poverty and racial discrimination, but also to violence. For example, in explaining the importance of pedagogical sensitivity and understanding that considers the specific emotional needs of each student, Lynn and Jennings (2009) contended, “While sensitivity to children’s emotional needs is important, an understanding of their living conditions and healthy respect for their humanity and individuality is key to effective practice in urban schools, it must also be an integral part of one’s teaching practice” (p. 190). The development of trust and dialogue between teachers and students was crucial for understanding the ways in which to meet students’ needs.

The uses of meaningful dialogue when discussing themes that are of interest to the students, allow teachers space for developing critical activities to engage all students. Dialogue serves as a vehicle for individuals’ critical reflection, social interaction, and learning that has endless possibilities of transformation.

Conclusion

Overall, literature regarding the enactment of critical pedagogy among secondary school teachers warrants significant further study. In spite of the emphasis on the importance of critical pedagogy and its inclusive nature, the number of clear examples in the body of literature regarding how secondary school teachers enact critical pedagogy and how they overcome challenges in classroom spaces was limited. There were no studies conducted on critical pedagogy in a school for gifted and privileged students. The study I conducted in The Southern School of Art seeks to add to this literature and contribute to the growing critical conversation regarding the aims of dialogue in critical pedagogy. In short, I hoped to learn how critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms. In Chapter III, I elaborate upon my research design and methods towards these ends.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

I employed a multiple teacher qualitative case study design, gathering various data, including classroom observations, individual teacher interviews, students group interviews, and document review of students' work, in order to examine how critical pedagogy is implemented in the secondary classroom setting.

Research Question

The research question that guided my study is: How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms? I designed this question based on the literature review as well as my personal experiences as a teacher and as a student. This research question served to frame the narratives of the teachers and students I interviewed, field observations, and document reviews. I describe these methods and the rationale behind my choices in the section below.

Research Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define paradigm “as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 17). The interpretivist paradigm best encompasses my approach to this study. Egbert and Sanden (2014) emphasize that “The ‘post’ paradigms underscore that reality is multilayered and complex and a single event can have multiple interpretations” (p. 34); interpretivism is one of the ‘post’ positivist

paradigms. In Merriam's (2009) view, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). The focus of my study is on the teaching practices of teachers who identified as critical pedagogues, their realities and challenges. My approach is a combination of interpretivist theory and critical theory, the goal of my research is to understand rather than make predictions. The focus of the study is on the teaching practices of teachers who identify as critical pedagogues, their educational philosophies and perspectives.

Critical theory research intends to take the research study beyond describing "what is," the intention of interpretivists, and toward describing, "what could be" (Glesne, 2011, p. 9). Critical theory guides my research study as a political act challenging common teaching practices that tend to reproduce injustices. It focuses on issues of power and domination and advocacy for those who are oppressed or disenfranchised. Furthermore, critical theory helps teachers and researchers see the relationships between thought and action, theory and practice in an effort to help dismantle unexamined assumptions among participants. It forces us to think about the ways in which people may accept common practices form the dominant culture and how to incorporate dialogue and critical reflection into the classroom setting. This research study focuses on how teachers enact critical pedagogy in the secondary classroom, bringing awareness and empowerment to those pedagogues committed to speaking out against school and community inequities and social injustice.

Research Design

I conducted a qualitative study. Merriam (2009) observes that, “A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 22). The researcher is interested in understanding meaning that is constructed by people. Qualitative research focuses on how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world, and what meaning they give to their experiences.

About the Research Site

From a critical perspective I conducted a qualitative study involving five self-identified critical pedagogues. The site I selected to conduct the research study is the Southern School of Art South Campus¹, a summer residential school program composed of highly academically gifted students who compete for 550 spots from public and private high schools in the region. This school offers summer programs supported and funded by the local General Assembly and the state Department of Education. These students spent five and half weeks receiving instruction in various courses of study also known as Area I, Area II and Area III respectively. They participated in several workshops, seminars and activities designed to enhance their abilities in various academic, artistic, philosophical and social areas.

The Southern School of Art offers a unique environment without the stress of grades and extrinsic motivational factors, as well as unique educational experiences with several teachers outlining social justice in their course descriptions. The program lost

¹ All names of the school, teachers, and students are pseudonyms.

funding in 2010 due to legislative budget cuts and as a result, there is a \$500 fee but there are fee waivers for students who lack the means to pay for it. There is no application fee. Faculty and staff are recruited from a pool of bright, dedicated teachers and professionals across the country, from public and private schools, colleges and universities, and independent artists and scholars. Most faculty members are in residence on campus and with the teaching assistants/counselors and students to form a community of learners. Teachers draw on their own fields of expertise to frame their courses. These fields include: English, psychology, gender studies, history, and education.

Areas of Course Study

Below, I describe each area of study.

Area I: The basic study of the student's nomination, that emphasizes contemporary text, compositions, artistic expressions, issues, and ideas and the theories that flow from them. Focus on ten academic and performing visual arts disciplines: English, French, Spanish, mathematics, natural science, social science, art, choral music, instrumental music, theater and dance.

Area II: Study that explores connections between and among the Area I disciplines. As integrative concepts emerge, the class attempts to construct understanding of contemporary ways of thinking and of the culture that produces them. Area II teachers draw on their own fields of expertise to frame their courses. These fields include English, psychology, philosophy, gender studies, history, and education. Since all Area II courses are structured differently, it is difficult to produce a single course description.

Area III: Study that grounds the learning from Area I and Area II in student's own personal experiences, and applies that understanding to their social worlds; that is, they try to discover links between ideas and actions, theory and practice.

Area I, Area II and Area III are supplemented by a rich array of visiting speakers, performances, exhibitions, field trips, demonstrations, optional seminars, and film series. Social and recreational events complement the academic focus. All participants eagerly praised the unique set up of the school; teachers enjoyed the confidence and trust they received from the administration, students and parents, when selecting the academic material to build the curriculum.

Methods

I incorporated a variety of methods in this study including individual interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and focus groups with students, and document review of student work. In this section, I describe the details of these methods.

Participant Selection

When searching for "critical pedagogues" who would agree to participate in the study I had some good leads. The principal of the high school where I teach, recommended teachers he knew who met the criteria for the study and who teach at the Southern School of Art during the summer. Also, Dr. Villaverde, one of my committee members, helped me to recruit a teacher who graduated from the Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations PhD program and who is also now teaching at the Southern School of Art. Through these recommendations, I was able to identify several "critical pedagogues" teaching at the site. I contacted the director of the SSA summer program,

Mr. Adams. I asked for his authorization to contact six teachers (hoping to get at least three to agree to participate in the study) and to give me access to conduct the study during the summer. Mr. Adams was hesitant at first. He expressed his concern that some of the teachers may not want to participate, and he said he was not going to ask them because he did not want them to feel obligated to participate. He allowed me to invite them to be part of the study and stated that if the teachers agreed to participate, he would give me permission to go ahead with the research study during the summer. During my interactions with Mr. Adams, it became obvious to me that he had tremendous respect and trust for his teachers.

I contacted six teachers, including a Spanish teacher. I thought since I am a Spanish teacher, it would be insightful to observe what this critical pedagogue did with the Spanish curricula. She was the only teacher who declined to participate, due to her schedule. The other five teachers agreed to participate and I proceeded to exchange information to schedule my visits. Teacher Bruno Adkins taught Area I classes. Teachers Sofia Benson, Christian Smith, Edison Wright, and Catherine Graham, taught Area II classes. I was not allowed to visit Area III classes due to the personal nature of those courses. Area III is a class in which students learn to articulate and interrogate their beliefs and opinions and listen to those of others. This class gets to the core of students' personal lives, helping them process new ideas they are learning in Area I, Area II, and speakers' series. With the permission of the director of summer program in hand, the next task was to coordinate and identify the participants. In June 2015, I distributed an email announcement (see Appendix A) to all five Southern School of Art teachers, asking for

participant volunteers who met all of the following criteria, which I shared with all participants.

I identified critical pedagogues as follows: Teachers who develop subject matter and foster academic skills in relation to their students' backgrounds and needs. They embrace teaching as a political act and position social, cultural, economic, political, and philosophical critiques of dominant power at the heart of the curriculum. Since my study took place during the summer, I was able to plan classroom observations every day, without distractions or interruptions. I was able to complete my teaching assignment duties for the academic year and began my qualitative research as soon as the IRB confirmed my proposed study. The director of the Southern School of Art summer program approved the participation of the five teachers; my research began at the start of the summer program. My first meeting with each participant teacher revealed the excitement these educators had before starting their summer teaching assignment.

Individual Interviews with Teachers

I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each participant teacher, one before the first classroom observation and the second after completing the unit of study I observed. I emailed the interview questions (see Appendix A) to all participants ahead of time to give them time to prepare and familiarize themselves with the type of questions I was going to ask. Most appreciated it, but Sofia did not have time to look at the questions ahead of time.

I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews because it would give the participants a chance to be flexible when answering the predetermined questions and it

would give me the chance to explore and learn from the first interview to more effectively formulate questions for the second interview (see Appendix B). I tried to create open-ended questions to capture the unique views of each participant. According to Merriam (2009), semi-structured interviews are located between structured and unstructured interviews: “This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 90). Glesne (2011) considers semi-structured interviews best suited for qualitative research. According to Glesne (2011), the goal of semi-structured interviews “is to capture the unseen that was, is, will be, or should be; how respondents think or feel about something; and how they explain or account for something” (p. 134). This type of interview allowed me, as the researcher, to develop new questions when I came across unexpected leads that arose in the course of the interview, and gave me the opportunity to probe deeper on initial answers.

I conducted the first interviews during the first two days of the summer program. During this time, participants shared valuable background information, such as what attracted them to teach in the school, their definition of social justice issues and critical pedagogy. I also asked them about their teaching philosophies, how they incorporated critical pedagogy techniques in the classroom, what they believed students brought to the classroom, issues affecting students, topics to be covered in the class, and challenges when teaching adolescent students. The first interview lasted between 65 to 95 minutes. The second interview lasted approximately 60 to 70 minutes. The objective of the second interview was to invite participants to talk specifically about examples of social justice

issues teachers and students face, the strengths of the class, diversity and multiculturalism, the faculty at the school, the goals of the unit, changes and adjustments, work of the students, and ideas for improvement among other topics that sparked my curiosity as I observed classes and reviewed field notes.

Student Focus Group Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews towards the end of my classroom observation with students. The students' group interviews included the students who submitted permission forms signed by them and their parent or guardian. This resulted in interviews with students from three of the participant teachers; Christian, 16 students; Sofia, 10 students and Bruno, 16 students. I asked prepared questions to explore the students' perceptions of each particular class (see Appendix C). In keeping with open-ended qualitative interviews, I used follow-up questions to explore their responses to my prepared questions and to expand upon ideas they mentioned that pertained to my research question. Students provided valuable information about their teachers' teaching styles, some highlights of the class; the goals of their learning experiences, effective teaching techniques, and topics that captured their attention. They also discussed the classroom experiences that helped them think more deeply about topics, what they learned, and new arguments and perspectives they had developed during the summer. Students were eager to share how the teachers handled different perspectives in class and they explained what they thought the teacher most wanted them to be able to do as they went back to their respective schools.

The questions I asked help me to probe deeper into the students' perspectives and insights about their learning experiences and social realities. I felt led to talk directly with the students, as they were the main participants in the classes I had observed. Students brought a different angle for me to analyze the data I had collected and it helped me clarify my assumptions and views.

I audio-recorded each interview as I took notes of the most significant ideas. Immediately following each interview, I began transcribing verbatim, listening to the recording several times to ensure accuracy, and reflecting on what I heard. After transcribing all 13 interviews, I emailed the participants their respective transcripts and asked them to make additions, deletions or clarifications. In addition, I maintained communication with all participants via email. I posed follow-up questions to obtain clarifications as needed.

Observations

I conducted a total of 36 classroom observations during the summer school program. Each observation lasted one hour and fifteen minutes. I attended eight sections of Bruno's Area I (Social Science) classes and seven sections from each teacher: Christian, Sofia, Edison, and Catherine's Area II (English, psychology, philosophy, gender studies, history and education) classes. The purpose of the observations was to capture the teachers' enactment of critical pedagogy teaching techniques in the classroom, how they engaged students and developed class dynamics. Each class dynamic was distinctly different based on the composition of the group, all groups had quiet members and noisy members; all groups had males, female's membership

influencing the quality of interactions. I created files from the handwritten field notes generated from each observation. In my study, the observations occurred in a natural classroom setting; therefore, they represented firsthand encounters with the phenomenon of interest rather than second hand accounts of the world obtained in the interviews (Merriam, 2009).

What I observed was driven by the theoretical framework of my study, the problem, and the research question. As a teacher researcher, I had to maintain the observation goals during the time spent on site. I aimed to remain an observer, a learner (not to teach or evaluate) focusing on research participants and their perspectives and behaviors. I tried to be open and flexible to changing my point of view, as Glesne (2011) emphasizes that, “To make the familiar strange is often more difficult because you must continually question your own assumptions and perceptions, asking yourself: Why is it this way and not different?” (p. 67). Participant teachers asked me to introduce myself to the class and to explain my role as a researcher. I tried to simply sit in the back of the room and observe; the students did not seem to notice my presence after the second classroom observation. During each observation, I took notes in a spiral notebook. I drew pictures of the classroom layout to better capture the setting. I took notes of the setting, interactions between teacher and students, interactions between and among students, demographics, dialogues, video-clips, performances, and the teaching techniques that each participant teacher implemented during the lessons. Each classroom observation lasted one hour and fifteen minutes.

During each classroom observation, I collected field notes, reflecting on my experience. I kept a journal to organize my ideas, thoughts and questions from the experience. Every evening, I would take time to expand on my field notes. As I re-read the notes I was able to add things and reflect on aspects of the observations that would contribute to my theories on what was going on with the way teachers lead class discussions and activities and the ways students engaged and developed new ideas, which helped shape the direction of the next observations and interviews.

I took advantage of each opportunity I had to talk to the teachers in order to ask questions and give them the opportunity to make clarifications about their instruction, as the students worked independently. Some of these casual conversations provided me with valuable information to understand the reasoning behind each activity and to get to know each teacher a little better. During the teacher interviews, I gave each teacher the opportunity to comment on anything affirming, contradictory, new, or otherwise noteworthy about what they may have noticed in any of the lessons.

For instance, we determined what classes I was to observe as well as where I would position myself as an observant, not a participant observant. Once I had met each case participant and taken time to consider my options, I got back to each teacher to schedule the observations on one another's calendars (see Appendix D for general outline and classroom layouts).

My decision to study five different teachers, from Area I and Area II classes stemmed from the belief that doing so would allow me to accurately capture how critical pedagogues enact critical pedagogy. I hoped to minimize the effect of my presence in

altering or disrupting the classroom space. This effort began with my decision to not bring any recording device, laptop or computer to class and discussing this concern with each teacher. They agreed to introduce me to their students; I explained the nature of my study; and encouraged them to simply not mind my presence during class.

Document/Media Analyses

In addition to interviews and classroom observations, I collected data through a review of documents such as class schedules, weekly activity schedules, class syllabi, class handouts, students' projects and activities, readings, and visual documents such as videos and photography. The strengths and limitations of the selected documents became clear as I questioned their relevance to my research question. According to Merriam (2009), "If documents are used as part of the process of inductively building categories and theoretical constructs as qualitative case studies, then their 'fit' with pre-established concepts or models is less of a concern" (p. 154). Despite limitations, Merriam (2009) believes documents are a good source of data for many reasons. Many documents are easily accessible, contain significant information, and are free; data found in documents can provide descriptive information and the most significant advantage of using documents is their stability. In other words, Merriam (2009) and Glesne (2011) believe that unlike observations and interviews, the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied with documents. Merriam (2009) states, "Documentary data are 'objective' sources of data compared to other forms" (p. 155). These documents, class schedules, weekly activity schedules, class syllabi, class handouts, readings, and students' projects and activities contributed to my understanding of these teachers'

planning and expectations as well as the students' expectations for completing planned lessons and activities.

Data Treatment and Analysis

My research stands to inform practice as much as it does theory because it focuses upon the pedagogical and curricular implications of what discourse are made available, taken up/exercised, embraced, critiqued, dismissed, or rejected in the interactions between teachers and students. Thus, my aim is to describe, analyze, interpret, and explain the pedagogical interactions between and among secondary students and their teachers as they negotiate a variety of issues (Area I) socio-economics, politics, class, gender and racial issues, as well as (Area II), philosophical realms of metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and rhetoric as lenses for critical thinking and knowledge production.

My data analysis proceeded in stages. Once my data collection period ended, I used a subset of these observations and interviews for initial coding (e.g., Egbert & Sanden, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Next, I compared all the coding schemes and, as appropriate, collapsed them. I settled on a final set of codes, which I applied when analyzing my observations and interviews. I again verified my consistent use of codes by asking myself some questions such as: What is this saying? What does it represent? What is this an example of? What do I see is going on here? What is happening? What kind of events are at issue here? What is trying to convey? I also used marginal notes and later it facilitated my analysis and made the codes fit the data. Finally, I created coded files on large poster boards (see Appendix E). Ultimately, I collapsed information across the

sources to understand my research question. Merriam, (2009) states, “The overall purpose (of qualitative research) is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 23). Merriam (2009) and Hatch, (2002) referred to two broad methods of analysis as the inductive and deductive approaches. They define induction as moving from the specific to the general, while deduction begins with the general and ends with the specific; arguments based on experience or observation are best expressed inductively, while arguments based on laws, rules, or other widely accepted principles are best expressed deductively. This research design is well aligned for my inquiry because I used inductive as well as deductive approaches to analyze the data and to examine and describe how critical pedagogues of adolescent students make meaning of critical pedagogy in their classrooms.

Data collection for this study consisted of teachers’ interviews, students’ interviews, classroom observations, and document/media analysis. I read the interview transcripts, observational notes and documents collected during my fieldwork, and my personal reflections’ journal. During this process of reading and listening, I wrote notes on what I saw and heard, and developed tentative ideas about categories and themes. Maxwell (2013) states, “reading and thinking about interview transcripts and observation notes, writing memos, developing coding categories and applying these to your data, analyzing narrative structure and contextual relationships, and creating matrices and other displays are all important forms of data analysis” (p. 105). Maxwell’s point needs to be emphasized, since so many qualitative texts and published articles covered the popular assumption that only coding is the main form of analysis.

I realized that I started this study with a deductive analysis. Deduction begins with the general and ends with the specific, testing hypotheses based on my theoretical framework, drawing from critical theory, and testing its implications with data (Hatch, 2002). My analysis also required an understanding of how to make sense of text and images so that I could form answers to my research question (Merriam, 2009). I began to look for patterns or themes in the texts or images analysis. I used previously identified categories from my literature review. I also analyzed the data for themes in pedagogy implemented in public education. Then, I turned to inductive analysis, moving from the specific to the general (Hatch, 2002) looking at the data gathered through methods of observation, interviewing, and document analysis. These results could not be measured exactly, but were interpreted and organized into themes or categories. I followed the most commonly used steps in analyzing qualitative data (Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). The first step was to generate a large consolidated picture from the detailed data (transcriptions or typed notes from interviews) to the more specific: codes and themes. Secondly, it involved analyzing data while still in the process of collecting data. In qualitative research, the data collection and analysis are carried out at the same time (Glesne, 2011). Thirdly, the phases of research in qualitative research are recursive, where I was able to move back and forth between collecting data and inductive and deductive research approaches to analyzing. Fourth, my qualitative research analysis of data involved reading it over several times and conducting an analysis each time. Reviewing the material allowed me to continue to explore more details and patterns related to each common theme. Fifth, there was no single approach I used to analyze

qualitative data; it was an eclectic process. Sixth, my qualitative research was interpretative; I made personal assessments of the data in a descriptive format (Hatch, 2002). Then, I developed the themes that captured the major categories of information thus bringing their own perspective to the interpretations. I analyzed my field note observations and notes from class documents in a similar fashion.

Trustworthiness

In order to obtain trustworthiness in my study, I implemented the following strategies recommended by qualitative researchers: reflexivity through journaling (Glesne, 2011, Merriam, 2009), triangulation of data sources (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), member checks (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009) and thick description (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Triangulation

For this study, I gathered data through classroom handouts, class schedules, students' work, and school website. Each document contributed to the triangulation of data sources, adding depth and further clarification to the classroom observations and participants' interviews. By selecting the evidence from various methods of data collection, I used triangulation, which contributes to the credibility and validity of my research findings and reflects different awareness regarding the integrity of the inferences I have drawn. According to Maxwell (2013), "This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to specific method, and allows a better assessment of the generality of explanations that one develops" (p. 128). Triangulation encouraged me to think about which particular sources of error or bias might exist, and

look for ways to deal with this, instead of relying on my selection of methods to do it for me.

There are various approaches to triangulation, which involves checking the integrity of the inferences one draws (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009) and involving multiple kinds of data-collection methods. In trying to understand the multiple perspectives available, I used triangulation of the observation field notes, teacher and students' interviews and documents/digital media collected throughout the study. Triangulation allowed me to compare the data collected through the participant's interviews against the data collected through field observations relevant to the research inquiry. Additionally, I was able to compare and contrast that field data against the documents collected such as class syllabi, class handouts, students work and other class materials, allowing for triangulation to support my analysis and findings. The collected data from each interview were audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed several times for transcription accuracy.

Member Checks

In order to establish credibility, I also performed member checks. Member checking involves sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to ensure accurate representation of them and their ideas (Glesne, 2011). To strengthen credibility, I contacted the participants through email and sent them the interview transcripts. I invited them to provide any feedback that would help give an accurate description of what was transcribed. All teacher participants gave me feedback on my emerging findings as I advanced with the analytical process. I

discussed the findings with them, and asked emerging questions to ensure I was interpreting the data accurately. It provided me with valuable information that helped rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants said or did and the perspectives they had on what was happening during the study.

Thick Description

I tried to capture thick descriptions by generating detailed information that would help the reader feel the entire experience. Rich, thick description, according to Merriam (2009), refers to “highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting and in particular, the findings of a study” (p. 227). I tried to provide my understanding of the lived experiences, avoiding generalizations, and considered all the complexities, meanings and interpretations of the human experience. I provided thick description by including the participants’ interview narratives with data collected from field notes and documents collected throughout the study. I used direct quotations when appropriate to make sure participants’ voices were present and to connect the reader with participants’ lived experiences. Additionally, for a more complete contextualization linking the Southern School of Art and the regular public school settings, I juxtaposed the pedagogical teaching practices in both settings based on my personal experiences as a secondary high school teacher, and aiming to the possibilities for social justice inside and outside the school.

Reflexivity

As researchers, we are encouraged to continually challenge our biases and to examine our stances, perspectives and views. Reflexivity addresses two central questions

that concerns researchers: What can we know and how do we know it? As prominent feminist researchers Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2012) put it,

Reflexivity exposes the exercise of power throughout the entire research process. It questions the authority of knowledge and it opens up the possibility for negotiating knowledge claims as well as holds researchers accountable to those with whom they research. (p. 559)

As a researcher, I continuously thought about my process of reflection on my research. Engaging in reflexivity helped me examine both myself, as researcher, and the research relationship with the site. I attended systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to its effect on me as the researcher, at every step of the research process. It also helped me identify my own biases and misunderstandings of what I heard and observed.

Reflexive practice can enable practitioners to learn from experience about themselves, their work, and the way they relate to home and work, significant others and wider society and culture. Reflexivity refers to the attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction by oneself, as the researcher, at every step of the research process. It is independent from ‘situating oneself’ as positionality that is connected with class, gender or race (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010). Reflexivity includes examining our personal and theoretical loyalties to see how they fit as points of references as we collect data that helps us make interpretations. Journaling becomes crucial for this process to emerge. Glesne (2011) states, “reflexivity generally involves critical reflection on how researcher, research participants, setting, and research procedures interact and influence each other” (p. 151). I practiced reflexivity throughout

my research study by keeping a journal, writing every day as I immersed myself into the setting of my study. Reflexivity has been an ongoing process throughout the study, about my own knowledge production towards interpretations, and research accounts of my findings. According to Pillow (2010), “Reflexivity thus is often understood as involving an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research” (p. 178). Needless to say, reflexivity is necessary because it reminds the researcher to be attentive to and conscious of various issues that may impact on the research, such as the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective. Most significant, reflexivity is very important in qualitative research because the researcher is the instrument. It is the researcher who interprets the qualitative data collected, as well as with the new ideas developing, as they represented new challenges in order to develop an accurate interpretation of the reality observed.

From the first day I visited the site for my research study, I kept a journal with me. It became part of me because I always had it handy. I wrote down my observations as I walked into the campus, made drawings, wrote questions, and reflections before and after the experience. I inquired into my own biases, subjectivity, and into the appropriateness of my research methodology and methods, including concerns in relation to data collection, interpretation and representation. There were times that I felt so inspired by what I was experiencing that I had to make an effort to monitor my emotions to not miss any details that may differ from my view. I felt frustrated when students and teachers discussed the seminars, guest speakers and performances. I did not get to see

those, so I had a difficult time understanding everything the participants were discussing. I tried to compensate by getting the teachers to explain what they were talking about after class. I also made notes in my journal about my expectations going into each class, how some students seemed overly confident and not very friendly. Then I had to remind myself, the point for me was to be there as an observer, not as a participant researcher. I grappled with the fact that I did not get to observe any teacher of color during my study. I did not see many students of color in the classes I observed. I questioned the validity of my study since it would not accurately represent the population of a traditional public school. It disappointed me, but I worked through it as I approached this study as unique opportunity, as a chance to explore the teaching techniques of five honest, dedicated and caring teachers, who opened their classrooms for me to enter to learn from them.

My goal was to make my research as accurate, legitimate, and valid as possible. During the first classroom observation, it became clear that the use of my notebook to record the events was the best choice. Typing into a laptop would have been distracting to the class. I decided to stick to my notebook and pen. I was able to write and draw without distracting anybody and feeling the role of observer. Having extra minutes in between classes became very important to filling in details after the class was over. Each classroom observation proved to be a different and enlightening experience. As I became more comfortable with my role, I noticed I became more self-critical; finding the world indeed is mediated by itself. In other words, what can be known can only be known through oneself, one's lived experiences, and one's biography (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

The first step was to comply with the university ethical approval protocol as mandated by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) throughout the research process. Once I received the notice of IRB approval, I sent out the participant agreement forms and set up a date to meet with each participant before classes started. I collected signed permission forms from the director, teachers, students and parents (see Appendix A). I adhered to all specific protocols; and used IRB-approved email and letters when recruiting participants (see Appendix A). Specific forms were used for the participation of minors. I also sent parents a consent form detailing the purpose of the study, volunteer participation, confidentiality measures, and benefits to society and participants. Because the emphasis of my study was on how critical pedagogues enact critical pedagogy in the secondary classroom, I informed participants, teachers and students that pseudonyms would be used to protect confidentiality. I secured access to audio-recorded interviews and typed transcripts by storing both on a password-protected computer. Additionally, I provided each participant with his/her own transcribed interview to review. I made small changes to honor participants' desire to make changes or omissions. Also, all field notes notebooks and journal notebook were kept along with signed permission forms in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

In January of 2016, I was audited to ensure my compliance with IRB regulations. There were three general areas of focus that the IRB representative sought: data storage and destruction of signed consent forms and confidentiality agreements stored securely according to the approved protocol; location of data secured (locked file

cabinet/password protected computer for identified data); and destruction of data after a year according to the approved protocol compliance. I had to present evidence to support my protocol and show that was IRB certified. I learned that these regulations and protocol are necessary to protect all participants and to contribute to the credibility of my study.

Limitations

The Spanish teacher's limited participation in the study presented a personal and pedagogical limitation. As a Spanish teacher, I was eager to learn from this pedagogue, particularly when the students and teachers in the school spoke so highly of her and her teaching techniques and expertise. Thankfully, I was able to witness one project that she did with her students that invited the entire school to participate. I discussed the project details later as it connected directly with the enactment of critical pedagogy in the secondary school.

The second limitation was time. The summer program lasted five and half weeks and therefore limited the amount of data that could be collected. The setting of the school allowed for me to see students briefly in different classes, socializing around campus, and participating, practicing or performing in their preferred field of study.

The third limitation was access to Area III classes and seminars. I was not allowed to visit or recruit any teacher from Area III due to the personal nature of the classes. In these classes it appeared that students and teachers explored the human condition much more in depth. I was told that students and teachers get very emotional and personal when sharing experiences. The evening seminars were for the students and

'outsiders' were not welcomed. Even though I was not allowed into these classes or seminars, I did get to see the same students in the classes I observed. I had access to some materials presented during the seminars that helped me understand the content of class discussions.

The fourth limitation is that I conducted the study in the SSA, a school with a very select group of students and thus may limit to inform practice for most secondary teachers.

The fifth limitation is the lack of diversity in the school. Teachers and students of color were underrepresented. This caused some limitations because it forced me to approach the study from a different perspective. I focused on how critical pedagogues brought awareness of controversial topics to a majority White student population, how they include the traditionally marginalized students and how they engaged all their students in discussions to unpack issues dealing with oppression and social justice.

Participant Overviews

Before delving into the details of the themes in the next chapters, I provide contextual information about each of the teacher participants. This information comes from my first interview I conducted.

Bruno Adkins was a social studies secondary school teacher. He was 27 years old and taught World History and Psychology. He had worked at Southern School of Art summer program for five years, first as a counselor and then taught there for three years. He defined himself as "White, middle class, heterosexual, and cisgender male." Bruno was assigned to teach Area I, Social Science to a class of 16 students who signed up to

take the class. Bruno generously agreed to be the first teacher I would observe and provided me with the necessary background information to help me get familiarized with the class and the students. We also took into account the nature of his class, versus the classes in Area II and Area III. Area I classes are the classes the students have selected to take because it is the academic area where they excel. Bruno was inspired to teach because his mother was an educator and she had a great influence in his life. Bruno shared that his teaching style had also been influenced by his desire to treat students as valuable people, to help them gain literacy skills for life, and to help them understand history from the perspective of the disadvantaged. According to Bruno, "I really enjoyed reading Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and I try to incorporate social justice in my lessons"

Sofia Benson was 36 years old, and taught for a total of 14 years as an English teacher at a local community college. She completed her PhD in educational studies. At the time of the study, it was her second year of teaching at Southern School of Art. Her scholarly areas of interest include queer theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, media literacy, and semiotics and post modernism. Sofia taught Area II classes; these classes were mandatory for students. She enjoyed teaching Area II because of its philosophical base and she had a chance to introduce students to epistemology, metaphysics, politics, rhetoric, and esthetics. Sofia was passionate about her job as an educator:

Part of my Master's degree was being trained to teach composition courses and my first real teaching experience, I found that it made me feel 'the most Me' and

the only thing that truly feels I was meant to do. I am always a teacher. It is just a part of who I am.

Sofia was also open about her identity and believed that her students needed to know her identity from day one. She told them: “I identify as a white middle class woman who is queer” (Teacher interview, p. 3). By being open with her students, Sofia helped to establish a safe space for students to reciprocate and express their ideas and beliefs. Sofia shared that the teachers that meant so much to her influenced her teaching career and that she tried to model them. Sofia stated, “I just try to be my authentic self and am influence by quiet, transformative democratic education that is specifically queer and racially inclusive.”

Christian Smith was a secondary school English teacher; he was 27 years old and has taught four and half years in public school and three years at Southern School of Art. He held a Bachelor’s degree in English (Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa) and minor in philosophy, as well as a Master’s degree in secondary English education. Christian taught Area II classes, which he described as classes in critical thinking, mostly structured around topics such as epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, esthetics, social issues and politics. During the regular academic year, he taught English at a local suburban high school. What motivated Christian to go into education was the love of content and learning, potential to enact positive social change, and his personal history of growing up in a low-income neighborhood with limited chances for social/economic mobility. Christian identified himself as “working class, non-Hispanic white, cisgender male” (Teacher Interview, p. 3). Christian’s teaching style was heavily influenced by a

dear college professor, by staying abreast of emerging research in the field, and by other critical pedagogues at Southern School of Art.

Edison Wright was 33 years old with a Ph.D. in English and taught writing and communications at Georgia Technical College. In the summer program, he taught Area II classes for three years. He enjoyed teaching digital scholarship on digital pedagogy and literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. Edison was familiar with the Southern School of Art because his wife also taught in the summer program. When discussing how his historical-sociocultural complexities influenced his teaching practice, Edison stated,

My status as a straight white cisgender white man with pronounced economic and educational privilege necessarily shapes my students' perceptions of me and the subjects of my courses. In the first years of my teaching, I felt a stifling necessity to constantly affirm the awkwardness of my own positioning in these conversations, which I thought would help students express themselves more openly. Often, the effect was the opposite, and my own discomfort was transmitted to my students. Now, even as I acknowledge the limitations of my own experiences and background in terms of understanding the experiences of others, I approach questions of identity more fearlessly in the classroom, and my students respond in kind.

Catherine Graham, 36 years old, taught a freshmen class offered at a local university. She was working on completing her Ph.D. She had a Master's degree in English and women's and gender studies. During the regular academic year, Catherine taught secondary school for over 10 years and taught at Southern School of Art for 5 years. She taught Area II classes. Catherine identified as queer and was well aware of her own marginalized and privileged experiences. When discussing how she approached her lesson plans, Catherine stated, "I think about my white privilege a lot in general and in relation to organizing curriculum and interacting with students" (Teacher Interview, p. 5).

When planning her lessons, Catherine was very intentional about including a variety of voices in addition to hers. According to Catherine, “It is way too easy to just teach the perspectives of rich white men, so I push back pretty regularly against that by including works by people of color, LGBTQ+ people, working class people, people who are not from the U.S., etc.”

Each participant teacher agreed that Southern School of Art gave them the freedom to create and build curricula. They had total control of the curriculum design. They collaborated with one another to plan the lessons based on a common goal. These teachers organized themselves into communities of researchers, dedicated to creating emancipating experiences for themselves and their students. They were seriously concerned with what was taught, how it was taught, and what should constitute the goal of the educational summer school experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the methodological approach I adopted for this study. First, I provided a rationale for the basic interpretative and critical qualitative research design and data collection methods. Then, I explained how I analyzed my data and how I addressed trustworthiness, reflexivity, and ethics. Finally, I outlined the university protocol when conducting a study involving human participants and I concluded the chapter by discussing the study’s limitations.

The themes that emerged from my analysis of the collective narratives, observations and interviews comprise the heart of the remaining findings chapters. In each findings chapter, I focus on a particular theme that aligned with the themes in my

literature review. To the extent possible, I tried to capture the voices of all my participants in this chapter by focusing on their verbatim words. I used thick description followed by my analysis at the end of each section. In conclusion, I offer my collective analysis of my research as a whole, as it relates to the literature and theories highlighted in this chapter. In chapter IV, V, VI and VII, I discuss the four major themes that emerged through the research analysis: Historical Background and Creating a Democratic Classroom, Incorporating Students' Funds of Knowledge "Hidden Treasure", Promoting Critical Dialogue and Problem Posing, and recognizing the Power of the Arts. In Chapter IV, I provide a brief historical background that contextualizes the need for this study and illustrate how teachers enact critical pedagogy by creating democratic conditions within their classrooms and how it relates to social justice advocacy.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CREATING A DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM

Introduction

In this chapter, I briefly describe recent educational mandates that have affected how public school teachers perform their jobs. I provide a frame of reference to better understand the state of public education in our nation and the pressures teachers face when designing and implementing curricula and creating the conditions for critical pedagogy to exist. I continue with background information about the site where my qualitative study took place. All teacher participants applied a democratic approach to teaching, made possible by freedom they had when developing curricula and delivering their lesson plans. I discuss these topics of democracy and freedom in the school setting, and then relate them to teachers' use of critical pedagogy and how this approach impacts students.

Because the purpose of my study is to find out how self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classroom, it is important to understand why it is difficult to exercise critical pedagogy in public secondary schools. Critical pedagogy is possible under the umbrella of democratization, which is opposite to dominant forms of education and pedagogy that only reinvent the future in the interest of a present. According to Giroux (2011), such forms disdain ethical principles and reduce the fundamental nature of democracy to a minimum outcome. A

democratic classroom is necessary for critical pedagogy to exist. As Henry Giroux (2011)

puts it:

Critical pedagogy must address the challenge of providing students with the competencies they need to cultivate the capacity for critical judgment, thoughtfully connect politics to social responsibility, and expand their own sense of agency in order to curb the excess of dominant power, revitalize a sense of public commitment, and expand democratic relations. (p. 77)

Public school teachers' freedom to exercise critical pedagogy and to expand their own teaching philosophies and democratic procedures are limited by their mandated adherence to a specific curriculum within a restricted time frame. Some essential questions arise: why is it so difficult for teachers to implement critical pedagogy techniques in the public school classrooms? Why are teachers teaching to the test? Why are teachers rushing through the material at hand, leaving students questions without answers? In order to address these questions, it is necessary to consider the broader educational political arena that shapes the system and thus, the conditions under which teachers must work.

Historical Background of Our Educational System

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act. Under the NCLB law, states must test students in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. States must report the results for both the student population as a whole and for particular "subgroups" of students, including English-learners and students in special education, racial minorities, and children from low socio-economic families. The law required states to bring all students to the "proficient level"

on state standardized tests by the 2013-2014 school year (U.S. Department of Education). Each state individually decided what “proficiency” should look like, and which tests to use. In the beginning of 2015, the deadline had passed; no state had managed to meet the proficiency bar for all of its students. Under this law schools were held accountable through what is called “adequate yearly progress” or AYP. If a school failed to meet its state’s annual achievement targets for two years or more, either for all students or for a particular subgroup, it was identified as not “making AYP” and subject to serious sanctions. For instance, a school that missed AYP two years in a row had to allow students to transfer to a better-performing public school in the same district. The low performing school had to offer free tutoring. Schools could face state intervention. The state could choose to shut down these schools, turn them into charter schools, or take them over. In addition, schools that did not make AYP had to set aside a portion of their federal Title I dollars for tutoring and school choice (Ahn & Vigdor, 2014).

In March 2010, President Obama’s administration released its own blueprint for revising the law, which would give states much more control over how to intervene in most schools, in exchange for setting high standards and putting in place teacher evaluations based in part on student outcomes. The blueprint failed to pass on Capitol Hill (McMurrer & Yoshioka, 2013).

In the fall of 2011, President Barack Obama offered states flexibility from key mandates of the NCLB law in exchange for embracing his education redesign priorities. The Senate and the House education committees did not pass the bill. In 2012, more than half of states were granted waivers, so the majority of the country was no longer

operating under the NCLB law as written (McMurrer & Yoshioka, 2013). In July 2013, the United States House of Representatives passed the bill to renew the NCLB law with only Republican support. By March 2015, most states began applying to renew their NCLB waivers, even as Congress wrestled with a reauthorization of the law.

For some, the purpose of NCLB was to narrow and perhaps even close the achievement gap in America. For many, it appeared a noble goal, but actually making it happen would take more than simply sanctioning school sites that invest their lives into reaching out to the economically disadvantaged students by teaching at a Title I school. Dynamic and superior classroom instruction could make a big difference, but that alone would not significantly narrow, let alone, close the achievement gap. The gap is much more complicated than what even the most gifted of teachers can control. Public school teachers have been placed in a vulnerable position due in part to high stakes testing within the federally mandated No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. Classroom teachers were instructed by school administration to increase test scores, especially state standardized test scores. Mora (2011) suggested that teachers are placed, with much tension and pressure, to increase test scores and this, in turn, impacts their daily instruction. Teachers have voiced that test preparation and test readiness have limited their teachings of other subjects. They concentrated in core subjects such as math and English, spending too much time teaching to a test, and not enough time answering students' questions. Mora (2011) stated, "As a result, entire class periods—hours at time—were spent teaching to the test, to the practice tests, and to the pre-practice tests in order to prepare students for both district-wide and statewide assessments" (p. 4).

Although education has seen trends of progressive ideologies that promote student and teacher empowerment (Anyon, 2014; Britzman, 2003; Steinberg, 2010), the dominant educational discourse mirrors a business model of efficiency (Anyon, 2014). Evidence of contemporary education replicating an industrialized manufacturing society can be observed in the recent Race to the Top incentives, No Child Left Behind mandates, teacher abilities closely linked to standardize testing, and course restrictions. I argue that these practices can restrict teachers and sedate students, particularly novice teachers, who are afraid to question the system or to take risk. For many students, school simply means going through the system and getting the grades that would allow them to pursue a college education. Consequently, learning is something that is simply not enjoyable. It resembles the banking concept of education (Freire, 2000); education becomes an act of depositing, in which the teacher is the depositor and the students are the depositories of knowledge. The teacher teaches and knows everything; the students are taught and know nothing. The teacher teaches and the students reproduce the information on the test. According to Freire (2000), this banking process of education forces students to store the deposits, diminishing their ability to think critically, adapting and accepting the world around them. Freire wrote, “The capability of banking education to minimize or annul the students’ creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who cares neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed” (p. 73).

Given such conditions, how can teachers and students be excited about teaching and learning? And what are the possibilities for real transformation in the public school

classroom? In order to find some answers to these questions, I focus on my study's research question: How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms? I studied five teachers at the Southern School of Art. I will describe how these five pedagogues navigated through their teaching experiences, how they planned their lessons, how they dealt with curricula, and how they were able to meet their goals set to reach all students.

The Research Site

The Southern School of Art is not a "regular" high school. The Southern School of Art provides powerfully-rich knowledge, culture, and opportunities to gifted students. Yet these resources are underexplored by most secondary educators. For instance, the teaching approaches I observed at Southern School of Art do not resemble the teaching approaches I have witnessed in a regular public high school, yet these teaching techniques can be used in any classroom setting.

The Southern School of Art is a unique setting where teachers have the autonomy to teach relevant, up to date, and controversial information; students can express themselves freely, engage in dialogue; and students do not have to study for tests. I spent numerous hours conducting observations in various classrooms; engaging in conversations with the teachers, students and faculty; as well as examining teachers' and students' perspectives about the school. The teacher participants stated that Southern School of Art was a place where they had the freedom to teach and introduce students to a democratic form of education.

What Makes Southern School of Art Unique?

The fact that the students have to fill out an application, attach letters of recommendations from their school teachers and go through individual interviews to be accepted into this summer academic program, indicates that Southern School of Art is an elite program for gifted and highly motivated students. Students can apply according to their strengths; it may be in the field of math, science, English, and Spanish, visual arts, music performance, dance, as well as other subject areas. Once they are in the program, they must attend classes; Area I meets every day for one hour and 15 minutes, and they choose their particular area. For example, if a student focuses on Social Studies, more time is allocated to that field. Area II classes are assigned to them. They meet every other day for one hour to explore more philosophical themes. Area III classes are also assigned to them and they meet every other day. In the evenings, they attend several workshops, guest speaker presentations and seminars. They also have practice time for their particular area of strength that is built into their daily schedule. Because it is a residential program, students do not go home at night. They live in the dorms and experience something similar to a boarding school. Teachers and students reside on campus, facilitating the personal connections and the development of friendships. There is a large dining room area where teachers and students eat. There, students can also see video presentations; they may be students' work or a speakers' series. There is a sense of a collaborative community unlike any other place I have experienced in education.

Teachers and students are there because they want to be. There is an unspoken code of honor; students attend this summer program because it is a privilege within itself

to be selected, and they understand the impact that the learning experience will have in their future endeavors. Students are exposed to a school life that allows them freedom and autonomy. There are no bells, no hall passes and no discipline problems. Students and teachers attend classes on time and follow the school schedule without issue.

Democracy in Education

Democratic education aims to develop democracy through active participation by all those involved in classrooms. In a democratic classroom, students have the power to make decisions about their learning, because power is shared, and young people are active co-creators of their own learning. Democracy in the classroom is an educational ideal that it is both a goal and a method of instruction. It brings democratic values to education and can include self-determination within a community of equals, as well as values as justice, respect and trust. Democratic education begins with the premise that everyone is unique, so each of us learns in a different way. By supporting the individual development of each young person within a caring community, democratic education helps young people learn about themselves, engage with the world around them, and become positive and contributing members of society. Leading thinkers from John Dewey (1997), Henry Giroux (2011) to Paulo Freire (2000), have articulated the basic tenets of democratic societies: they are committed to human rights create well-being; people learn primarily based on the people and environment that surrounds them; and culture is transmitted from one generation to another, therefore, we need to create environments where people of all ages, especially youth, are immersed in the values, practices, and beliefs of democratic societies and human rights (Giroux, 2011, p. 76).

Teacher participants in my study brought democracy back to life in the classroom by taking on the challenge of linking critical pedagogy with the process of democratization. They embraced new approaches to teaching by exercising reflexivity as a teaching tool and by using their ability to reflect on their teaching practices. At Southern School of Art, the administration trusted and supported the teachers' ability to choose what to teach as well as how to teach their classes, enabling teachers to explore new avenues as they designed their lessons, taking their students' needs into account. While the main endeavor of the critical pedagogues involved in my study seemed to be teaching controversial issues; it became clear the lessons were purposely designed to address social justice issues.

There were several ways teachers enacted democracy and promoted freedom in their classes. Democracy in the classroom means an ongoing process of democratization, a process that stresses the unfinished process, while rejecting notions of democracy that are given a definite formula (Giroux, 2011). Critical theory aids democratic principles as it invigorates the relationships among democracy, ethics, and political agency by widening the significance of the pedagogical as political practice as making the political more pedagogical. Therefore, when teachers have the freedom to create an environment where democracy exists, they are able to present curricula that reflect the interests and dreams of each student. Giroux (2011) emphasizes that

Pedagogy is a moral and political practice that is always implicated in power relations and must be understood as a cultural politics that offers both a particular version and division of civic life, the future, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. (p. 71)

A democratic classroom allows teachers to exercise a pedagogy that empowers students socially and politically within and outside the classroom culture. In order to annul banking education, teachers need to create the conditions for a democratic classroom that fosters students' creative power to transform the world. Education should therefore be the practice of freedom, as opposed to one of domination (Freire, 2000).

The first time I stepped foot into the school, I sensed a different approach to dominant ideologies; there was an air of freedom and newness, compared to a regular public high school site. For instance, when I stood in the middle of the patio in the college campus, I observed students and teachers engaged in intellectual conversations, and I felt the love for learning. As I walked around the school, students were engaged in various activities; some involving notebooks and books, arts and crafts, music, plants and trees, and others in simple dialogue. The setting was intriguing to me because it was during the month of June; the weather was hot and normally students are enjoying summer vacation. As I approached the "teachers' room" I met Christian, who had just finished meeting some of his students. The room was very big and untidy. It had tables, computers and a big screen television set. Most of the summer school instructors were there, chatting and the ambience seem relaxed and friendly. Christian greeted me with a big smile. He was happy to introduce me to some of the other teachers and to answer some of my burning questions. Everyone I met was happy and excited to be teaching during the summer. All of the teachers agreed that Southern School of Art was the best place to teach. I inquired about how they planned their lessons and what curriculum they had to follow. In this informal conversation, they explained that they planned the

curriculum together and got to choose what to teach. They exercised their expertise in their respective fields and created relevant lessons to engage students without the traditional limitations of a public school. I was eager to begin my observations and we managed to arrange a schedule that would allow me to observe five different teachers from Area I and Area II respectively.

Critical Pedagogy and Democracy

When discussing the topic of uniqueness with one of the teacher participants, Catherine, she attributed the unique setting to being able to teach using critical pedagogy techniques across the board. Catherine thought that being able to use these teaching techniques motivated teachers to be more mindful about the importance of democracy and the political implications of teaching, as well as the impact their teaching had on the students at Southern School of Art. According to Catherine,

So I think that one part of it is that by creating a democratic setting it facilitates the use of critical pedagogy, it allows teachers to think about or helps teachers to think about the complexities of social justice issues. Um, and to think about how they are structuring their classes in relation to all of those things and I think that the other part of it sort of how these things play out in the classroom. So you know; how are teachers and students, together um, attentive to issues of injustice or inequality. How they may be perpetuating these things, um how are they using awareness about themselves as social and political beings?

Teachers at Southern School of Art intentionally shared common teaching practices that enabled them to create a more meaningful pedagogical atmosphere. They created lessons that engaged students to connect their own lives and everyday experiences to what they learned in the summer program. The classes I observed showed more than a mere transfer of receiving knowledge in a static manner. Teachers paid attention to what moved the

students, their passions, and motivations. They planned lessons that helped students see how they may be contributing or connected to existing material relations of power.

Teachers exposed students to controversial topics, such as racism, sexism, social intolerance, and homophobia. Giroux (2011) maintains that,

At stake here is not only a pedagogical practice that recalls how knowledge, identification, and subject positions are produced, unfolded, and remembered but also how they become part of ongoing process, more strategic so to speak, of mediating and challenging existing relations of power. (p. 82)

While the topics helped students think critically, it is also important to note that these were highly motivated students who chose to attend this summer program. All of the students interviewed agreed that the SSA was a place that allowed them to freely explore a variety of subjects without boundaries. Students were aware that they were part of a selected group and understood that they had a responsibility to perform well, regardless of receiving credit. Class participation happened spontaneously and enthusiastically.

Hanna, a student, observed that,

Here generally is not like students are going to do exactly what they are told to do, it is that generally here we have more high achieving students they are more interested in learning and being here. But there is a lot of stuff going on when you have a lot to do, even if you don't do the readings, people still participate in the discussion. There are not such high level that you have nothing to say, they think about the topic and the open-environment is conducive to participate.

Teachers and students both contributed to the dynamic of teaching and learning. Teachers learned from students and students learned from teachers. In order to transform the classroom, teachers set up parameters with their students.

Setting Ground Rules Together

Participant teachers believed that students must actively participate when creating their classroom learning environment. Teachers presented themselves as equals by allowing students to call them by their first name and set the rules for communicating and respecting one another's similarities and differences. All participants implemented similar class rules that were created in conjunction with the students. These teachers believed that by setting the rules together, it diminished the possibilities for behavioral problems, promoted respect for one another, encouraged students to listen better, and established mutual accountability for helping enforce the rules they helped create.

According to Sofia,

Um . . . so we create ground rules together, we determine how we are going to be in this space together; they create the space they want and I just ask them questions so they get the space and how it would look like. So I allow them agency in the classroom.

Teachers valued students' input. They envisioned the type of environment they wanted to create and used students' input to develop class objectives and have them engage from the first day of class. In our first interview, Sofia was excited to discuss the importance of involving her students in creating the rules and expanding her class goals and objectives. Sofia emphasized that teachers should invite their students to be part of the planning. In Sofia's view, "I allow them space to create the class rules so they can have input and try to let them determine how the class is going to go." I have always believed that students do respect what they help create. If the teacher sets the rules, without students input and shares them with the students, it contributes to a non-democratic classroom. When I

observed Sofia's class, I witnessed how she was able to discuss class rules by offering her students the opportunity to make suggestions and by presenting language that they could adopt to express their ideas. Sofia clearly expressed that the class needed to come to an agreement on how they wanted to work together. Sofia urges students to create rules that could facilitate dialogue:

Teacher: How do you want to work? How do you want the course to work? How do you want the course to work for you? Maybe if you are a big speaker, maybe limit yourself to speak. Raising hands may not be a good idea for the flow of ideas. I want you to feel responsible for inviting others to the conversation. You are a big part of this conversation.

Jason: I feel like it will be good to invite people to the conversation.

Teacher: Be mindful that we listen before we speak. What are your expectations? What do you want me to do?

Stephanie: When things are not flowing you should step in.

Teacher: Good! If you can think of more let me know. What do you expect of yourself?

Alice: Be opened minded.

Tonya: Be willing to consider other's ideas.

Teacher: I would encourage you to set up goals for you for every class. Listen better. Talk only a few times, etc. What are your expectations for your classmates. First respect yourself. Challenge me. Be mindful that your judgment is not harmful or oppressive to others.

Bill: Make sure everyone gets to express their opinion without interruptions.

Teacher: Practice self-care, advocate for yourself. I want you to be excited to be here with me for an hour and fifteen minutes!

Sofia's point was to set the stage so that all students could feel a part of the planning on how the class dynamic was going to develop. By introducing terms such as harmful, oppressive, advocate, she exposed her students to critical thinking. She encouraged students to listen and to help one another to participate without monopolizing the conversation. When class rules are established together, among teacher and students, there is space for building curriculum and opening new possibilities for meeting class objectives. Students' voices become important as they actively contribute to the construction of classroom relationships.

Freedom

Participants believed that academic freedom allows teachers to create lessons suited to their particular discipline and classroom, regardless of social, political, state or national mandates. Teachers can drive a lesson much more effectively by teaching students how to think critically, how to dissect a particular topic, by giving students enough time to process the information and by modeling critical dialogue in the classroom. Freedom to create an ideal democratic setting allows teachers to not only inform, but also model action and ultimately help students become more engaged citizens.

For example, teacher participant, Christian Smith's position in the classroom, was driven by the freedom and democracy that his administration provided. He had the freedom to create curriculum, select all the materials to support his teaching, and to decide how to arrange his classroom, conducting his class in an open circle. From the first day of class, he introduced the ideas of "democratic assembly," in which the students

had a voice and responsibility to express their ideas freely. His focus was building curriculum around real life experiences. In his first interview, Christian stated:

I feel very fortunate to have a lot of freedom in the production of my curriculum, um . . . I would say we do a lot of, in our department, we do a lot of curriculum sharing, lesson plans sharing and in the beginning in the first week of orientation we meet frequently to talk about what we are going to be teaching and how we are going to be teaching it. Especially um . . . with an emphasis on critical pedagogy; again I would say rather than focusing on the big concepts, maybe focusing on some big concrete example and then branching on the theoretical constructs from there, with things like looking at something like honor killings um . . . or the lack of access to education that women experience. Rather than saying we are going to talk about ethnocentrism, we are going to talk about cultural relativism, radical relativism, we are going to talk about totalitarian ethics, and in relation to that; let's talk about the core issue at hand, and then go off in various directions, and explore. Um . . . within that if that makes sense . . . Um so rather than roots of sort of the curriculum, like the think that structures it, being the ideas, it is the actual lived example from there you can talk about larger concepts such as, ethics morality, and relativism.

It became clear to me that the participant teachers in my study shared the same feelings about having freedom to select what and how they teach. Since Christian had both taught at Southern School of Art and at the public school, he elaborated on some of the main differences:

In my high school experience, I feel very much limited by standardized testing, by impositions of a higher bureaucratic level, so where I have complete freedom here to explore those critical thinking constructs um . . . We also don't have grades at Southern School, um we don't have any kind of standards at Southern School, um I don't, and even if we did, I think that the trust that the administration here places on us to go through making an important learning engaging experience for the students. Now I don't think that happens in the public schools, but um when we have categorized listed every topic that we are supposed to teach and in validating, holding me accountable for that I think it can be difficult be able to incorporate critical pedagogy, in the public school, into the curriculum. Um when I know that I have to cover the Renaissance Period, and have to cover Victorian,

Modernism, I have to teach textual analysis, I have to teach quality writing, it can be difficult to orient back to those critical pedagogy topics, if that makes sense.

In regular public schools, standardized testing and curriculum restrictions are set by the school district, state and national standards. Teachers are monitored closely; they are observed and evaluated by their school administrators and are held accountable for students' tests results, leaving teachers feeling that they have little room to teach what and how they feel is best to engage students in critical thinking.

Class Size

Each class I observed had 16 students, a very small number compared to the number of students found in a traditional public school high school class. Christian discussed class size and how it affects teaching and learning:

Um, I say it is more or less also the number of students that I have, generally I have 135 to 145 a year and here we have 16 per class, which makes it large group discussions easier, not having 30 in a class, like I do at the public school. And the amount of grading, absolutely, and that often detracts from my ability to stay relevant with issues of social justice, if that makes sense. I often grade four sections of AP literature, a writing intensive class, I grade every weekend, I spend 8 or 9 hours grading and that is not developing curriculum, that has nothing to do with curriculum, that is just assessing student's growth, which is also important, but when class sizes are doubled of what they should be then that 4 hours that I would like spend grading and the other 4 I would like to spend developing curriculum, that is a limitation!

Class size is an issue in the public high schools. There is a suggested formula in allotting teachers to schools based on the number of students per class, but in North Carolina that cap was removed. Writing in *The Washington Post*, Egan (2016) states, "House Bill 112 allowed the state to remove class size requirements while still allowing monies from the

state to be allocated based on the suggested formula” (para. 14). Egan’s point is that in the state of North Carolina, public schools do not have limits on the number of students a teacher may have in class in grades four through 12. Consequently, the over-populated classrooms make it more difficult for teachers to comply with individualized instruction, implementing evaluations, grading students’ work, and moving forward with the prescribed curriculum. In the Southern School of Art, teachers have a maximum of 16 students per class, and in some classes, they had teacher’s assistants who were available to help the teacher with instruction and with preparation of class materials. Teachers were able to dedicate more personal attention to each student as well as to have significant amount of time to listen to all students’ voices.

Administrator’s Trust

All participants eagerly praised the unique set up of the school. Participant teachers enjoyed the confidence and trust they received from the administration when selecting the academic material to build the curriculum. In Sofia’s view, “Teaching at the Southern School of Art is a privilege.” Sofia, as well as all the other teacher participants, shared the same sentiment. Sofia stated, “Our principal trusts us to do our jobs. We choose what we want to teach. We select the curriculum we teach. We have autonomy, which is huge!” In the regular school system, teachers are expected to follow the state mandated curricula and to cover specific amounts of material. In the public arena, the school curriculum becomes the site for debate, and an issue of power.

Many researchers (Anyon, 2014; Darder, 2008; Diaz Soto & De Moed, 2011; Steinberg, 2010) in this field agree that teachers struggle with mandates and impositions,

such as The No Child Left Behind Act, filled with accountability provisions. The imposition of state and federal standards of measurement of knowledge for all learners has produced additional pressures on teachers to teach to the test (Steinberg, 2010). This constant pressure to perform to the test is a present theme among teachers and students who are struggling in the face of top down mandates. In the Southern School of Art, teachers felt respected as professionals when they had the opportunity to create their own class syllabi, not having to deal with tests in order to assess students and having the opportunities to create a democratic classroom. In my first interview with Edison, he stated,

I am used to creating my curriculum because I teach college, um yea! I like that there is nobody looking at my syllabus. I don't know how I would operate with a prescribed set of syllabus. It will be difficult to create the democratic environment we have here. I may have to do it at some point in my life. But not that there are not set goals for the curriculum at college or here. Sort of the particular ways that I teach tend to be set by me, so I meet the goals we set. I sort of I am used to it!

Edison affirmed that democracy cannot exist without freedom. All participants agreed that the way the Southern School of Art operates is conducive to social justice consequently allowing for an environment conducive to critical thinking. Students were encouraged to think critically about their education, their social realm, and their role as productive citizens in the world. Sofia's teaching experiences at SSA were very positive. She believed that this setting could work in any public school if the teachers were given more trust and freedom. In Sofia's view, "I think that SSA works so well because the institution functions differently, like there is so much more freedom." She further explained that everybody working at SSA was happy teaching there because the

institutional culture was different. Sofia stated, “I think that other schools could work like that too if there were more trust and freedom.”

There was a clear connection between democracy, freedom and trust. The trust the administrators gave the teachers led them to freely create curriculum in a democratic setting. Participant teacher, Bruno, created a democratic classroom by emphasizing the importance of addressing pressing issues for the students in the social studies classroom. In his regular teaching experience as a social studies high school teacher, he felt restricted to the prescribed curriculum. There was no room for exploring current issues that the students wanted to explore. There was just not enough time, freedom or space to cover students’ questions. At Southern School of Art, students and teachers were able to explore more contemporary issues that concerned everyone in the classroom. In our conversation, Bruno stated,

If students want to talk about more pressing issues that are relevant to them today, they can. Like here we can talk about social issues that are important, my whole class is about social issues. In the public school I have to try to fit these issues into the curriculum they give me, so it is difficult. The more freedom the teacher has the better the environment, so I think it is better for the students as well.

Through our conversations, I began to notice a similarity in ideologies among the participant teachers. They believed that knowledge was a social construction, and that schools are subjected to social political power that contributes to restricting the way teachers teach, which also reflects the views of many experts in the field (Leistyna et al. 1999). Tierney (2009) reaffirms the idea that knowledge is not neutral, that it reflects the human interests, the social, and power relationships within society. Tierney discusses

knowledge as a social construction that has unavoidable political implications; therefore, politics has corrupted the academic setting. Tierney (as cited in Leistyna et al., 1999) writes, “I argue that knowledge is a social construction that always has had inevitable political ramifications” (p. 130). Therefore, it became more intriguing to me how these educators at Southern School of Art were able to create their own curriculum and had the freedom to exercise their ideas about teaching and learning successfully.

When I interviewed Catherine, she was eager to share her personal experience in the classroom.

Sibela: How is it different for you to have the freedom to create curriculum?

Catherine: That is huge! Thankfully it has been the case for most of my teaching experiences, just because I haven't been working as a teacher in a classroom in public school. Like I have been working through a nonprofit organization, or teaching college or teaching here so I think that it is possible to use critical pedagogy with a more restrictive curriculum, but um . . . it's way easier when I have so much trust from the people that are way higher up in the institutional context. This one included. Um . . . Like another whole layer of stuff I don't have to think about I can just be like here I am going to build community. I don't have to say I have to read these essays about police brutality, I get to decide, we are going to talk about rhetoric and we are going to use this, and this is what we are going to do.

Participant teachers shared a common view when discussing the effect trust and freedom had on their teaching practices. The ability to create curriculum in collaboration with other teachers from other disciplines was valued. Having the freedom to choose complementary materials, class activities, and feeling the trust the administration placed on teachers, contributed to the democratic environment I observed. Students thrived when exposed to classroom techniques that facilitated the process of addressing various social

issues. Teaching techniques varied according to the classes they taught. Teachers at SSA created activities that engaged all learners and were able to experiment with new tools to encourage student's participation and promote the development of critical thinking skills.

Student Engagement

The democratic idea of connecting real life experiences to the classroom curriculum played an important role when engaging students. The teacher participants spent time planning their lessons with the students in mind. The activities I observed during classes reflected the teachers' objectives to engage all students. Some of the topics were abstract and philosophical in nature, but they were tied to students' lived experiences. For example, in Sofia's class, she introduced the question: "How do we know what we know? She followed up with more questions: Where do ideas come from? Why do we know what we know? She invited students to free write, a technique to encourage students to write or draw freely, without passing judgment, encouraging them to let their ideas flow. She gave them time to think then followed up with two more questions: What do you think? What influences you? Students finished writing and she invited them to share their answers with the class. They began to share their ideas, connecting the questions and their personal views:

Jane: I think that my own experiences affect what I know. My religion, I am a Christian.

Robert: My music, traditional composition. My individual understanding of what tradition is.

Carol: My family.

Erika: Teachers and mentors, they have given me different perspectives.

Bobby: Ideas are the foundation of everything . . . For instance when we think of a pig, bad golf, a brick house, reason, fear, protection, health insurance . . . every idea has a particular meaning to each individual.

Anne: The way you grow up, your home situation.

Katie: Society, culture, country . . .

Janna: Books, media . . .

Rey: News, national and international

Teacher: So how do we determine what is real? How we construct our reality is based on what we believe in.

The process of brainstorming ideas helped students consider various points of view. Then she asked students to free write and define: What is real? She also asked the students to think about the following questions: Metaphysics—What is real? What is knowledge? Is God real? Students showed to be engaged in deep thinking as they listened to the teacher explain these concepts and ideas. Sofia then said, “We will explore these questions a lot in relation to knowledge.”

Class discussion continued as the teacher wrote the students thoughts and ideas on the white board. This action seemed to validate students’ opinions and ideas. Sofia asked the students to rank various items from 1 to 12 in order of importance, whether or not they were real. When a student asked what measurement he should use to rank the object, she responded: “Use literal number.” Sofia assigned numbers to the students and split the class into small groups. Students took their list of objects and assigned a rank to each one. She invited the students to debate their points of view, reassuring them that all opinions

were valid and worthy. Students engaged quickly, enthusiastically, voicing their opinions as they showed confidence explaining their views:

Sofia: With your group I want you to argue your point, why you chose that. Everybody's contribution is valuable.

Jason: Explain why you rate color as a five. How we have been taught what color is? Because we are taught the same color to believe what the color is. But is it?

Jenna: The way we see it. Perhaps the way we feel it. What is real? What is physical? What is mental?

Students continued to argue their points of view, explaining how they decided what was real. They began to connect their experiences and understanding of words and concepts to the class discussion.

Bobby: Dreams, I gave it a number five . . . Like if your dreams are based on your emotions.

Katie: Then your dreams will have to be real.

The lesson evolved from the basic question into a deeper, philosophical conversation. Students' ideas were respected by everyone and they managed to pose some thought-provoking questions. Students engaged in meaningful dialogue that showed their enthusiasm to participate. They worked individually and in groups. The conversations reflected students' own ideas as they supported their arguments with concrete examples from their lived experiences. The teacher monitored students and made herself available to answer their questions. Sofia later explained to me how students' interactions and ideas

provided her data for designing her lessons and for selecting supportive teaching materials.

I had the opportunity to interview some of the students from three participant teachers' classes. These students were happy to share their perspectives with me. We were only able to have one group interview due to time constraints. Here is some of their feedback when discussing the curriculum, the democratic setting and their learning experiences in the classroom. Bruno's students said,

Anne: One thing that I noticed like we started off this summer with some interesting topics, something to spark the conversation, and the summer went on and we got more comfortable with each other. The topics were so interesting, we normally don't get to talk about that kind of things in our schools, and we definitely started some more partisan discussions . . . but we can show our opinions, and we are very comfortable with each other. So I can tell that Bruno was kind of thoughtful and certain topics he decided to pick over the summer, he decided what we were going to discuss this summer and when we were going to discuss them. This classroom experience did impact me positively!

Joe: Yes, but I think that the classroom environment, where people don't shoot you down when you express your opinions is why we were able to discuss things so openly.

Joe identified the positive impact the democratic class setting had in the way the class evolved and covered the material. The democratic conditions created by the teacher and the students contributed to the respectful and safe spaces created for everyone to enjoy.

Sofia's students said,

Jay: Two particular times when I really enjoyed the class is when we discussed Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Just because I think that that is pretty cool and it relates to different stuff, and also when we were able to write questions on cards that really interest us, and not necessarily what she had given us. We

went around the class and we read the questions and then discussed them. I think that we were able to connect more to those, the Truth vs. Reality that is abstract, but we still had group discussion.

Lea: I learned a lot of different topics, because a lot of the topics we discussed I had not really formed an opinion about and so I found out what I believe and what side and what not. Um, I specifically enjoyed learning about ethics and charity.

Jay highlighted the significance of learning about the topics they didn't get to explore in their regular schools. By applying democratic principles in the classroom, asking students to pose questions, and by giving students agency, participant teachers are able to successfully teach complex material and reach all learners. Christian's students said:

Gail: The curriculum here makes us question like what we know. It makes us think about right and wrong, like what it actually is, and like seeing people's perspectives.

Brent: There are a lot of things that like we just take for granted and that we don't really question in a daily basis, like privilege, gender, racism, feminism . . . and this class like makes us. It kind of opens our minds up.

Cara: We really never think about these things, we kind of just accept them and leave them alone. So here we kind of remember them they are there and they are kind of open for interpretation. It is fun to see like how many different interpretations we can find.

Katy: We also have a lot of questions that don't have definite answers. But we get to ask those questions. I feel free to ask!

Jill: And we get to think about what we originally thought about the issue, oppose to just going along to what society believes.

These students clearly appreciated the democratic classroom set up. Democracy was established by the teacher, educating students in the language of critique and possibility.

These teachers helped students to critically analyze the political, moral and ethical

considerations central to their education. By creating a democratic classroom, teachers created positive citizens, willing to take risks and equipped them to fight for social justice. Participants stated that Southern School of Art was an educational experience unlike any other.

Activities that Engage

All teacher participants agreed that providing students with pre-readings to set the stage for class discussions was crucial in stimulating their critical thinking skills. The discussion topics were relevant to main class objectives and tapped into students' previous knowledge.

When introducing a subject, teachers assigned a reading to prepare students to think critically about a problem or a situation related to issues of justice, happiness and equality. The democratic set up allowed teachers to stop the reproduction of the social order in school; teachers chose readings that helped students critically challenge the social status. This strategy helped engage students, as they began to connect their ideas to class discussions, expanding their knowledge about the subject matter and asking relevant questions.

Free write is a strategy used by participant teachers to promote the flow of students' ideas and the process of questioning the status quo. It simply means to write stripping themselves from judgment. Teachers use democratic principles as they ask students if they want the teacher to read their writing. The idea is to show students ethical options, if they give their permission the teacher will read their journals; otherwise the teacher will not read it, because it will be unethical. Free writing activities can be used in

a variety of ways; they serve as a starting point for the development of ideas, arguments and to help students organize their thoughts, before class discussions take place. Writing does evolve; therefore, growth is eminent as the student advances through the class.

Collaborative Learning

The criteria for grouping students varied according to the needs of the class. Teachers made an effort to know their students from the first day in order to better understand their needs. The students usually started class in a circle or a square, facing one another; the teacher usually was part of the circle and the students selected where to sit as they arrived to class. Small groups were used by all teachers to help students focus on a particular discussion before presenting their ideas to the rest of the class. They listened to one another's arguments, experiencing less intimidation than when they were in front of a large group. Students were sometimes divided in small groups by selecting a partner of their choice, by selecting the person sitting next to them or by the teacher assigning a number to each class member, and then splitting them into small groups. Allowing time for discussion clearly helped them build their argument and generate examples to communicate their points of view more clearly. By listening to ideas, whether in agreement or disagreement from their partner(s) helped clarify their own way of thinking. After that process, teachers would ask students to come together in a big circle to share their ideas and arguments with the entire class.

In some instances, when working on group projects, teachers would assign groups according to student's personalities, strengths, and interests. The nature of the project was also subject for consideration. For example, Catherine assigned her students an "Inquiry

Lab” of their choice. Students identified a set of curiosities that they shared as a group and figured out how to ask questions about the topic. The students were given flexibility on how to pursue it. In this project, they thought about an object and how to describe it. Later they had a workshop in class; students came together and presented their projects to other groups for feedback on how to make their inquiries more rigorous, or if and how to take them in a different direction. Grouping was crucial to promoting collaboration.

According to Catherine,

I put students together because they will be able to support each other in some way. There are some groups that I put together because, I think this is not in the class that you will be observing, there are these two dudes that would just dominate the conversation, so I just put them in a group together, because I thought you can just talk over each other and we will see how that goes . . . ha, ha, ha you know . . . Um . . . so it is going to be a little more individualized, that component. I will be working with each individual group, but I am just going to let them work together. I provide them with a loose structure, but they will be hopefully using a lot of the skills that hopefully they have accumulated in critical thinking land!

Teacher participants valued collaboration and class participation from all students. The process of grouping the students according to their strengths and abilities facilitated the dynamic of building a democratic classroom environment. For instance, if a student was more reserved, it helped to be in a pair or a group with students who were more extroverted. If a student was weak in a certain subject area, it helped to put him/her in a pair or group with stronger students. The level of participation, dialogue and engagement tended to increase in a collaborative setting. Teachers were willing to experiment with various collaborative projects because grouping could be done in so many different ways.

Another tool that was widely used at the SSA by teachers was note cards. Students were handed a note card or index card then encouraged to write something about a topic. Students did not put their names on the cards. Then the teacher collected the cards and read them one by one, as he/she opened the floor for class discussion. Teachers received interesting questions that showed how students connected to the subject, facilitating the way the teachers explored topics at a deeper level. The note cards aided teachers on the selection of teaching materials such as visual aids, texts, power point presentations, visual outlines, graphic organizers, pictures, and the like.

The teaching techniques mentioned above can be implemented in any classroom, but it is important to include all students learning styles in the lesson planning. Teacher and student interactions emerge naturally though democratic engagement established from the first day of classes. In a democratic classroom, teachers plan and set class rules with their students. Students are equipped with theoretical lenses in order to be able to discuss difficult and controversial topics.

Provide Students with Theoretical Lenses and Vocabulary

Students at Southern School of Art were eager to learn new vocabulary as they applied pre-established democratic classroom rules such as listening, asking meaningful questions and respecting one another's ideas and views about complex issues. Teachers presented theoretical perspectives and introduced terminology that supported the development of critical dialogue and analytical thinking. Area II teachers emphasized the philosophical realms of metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and rhetoric as lenses for critical thinking and knowledge production. To get to these areas without

asking students to absorb much philosophical terminology, Edison for instance, structured the summer around a series of five big questions, each of which asked some version of the major question underlying the course: How do we know?

Week 1: How do we know what's real?

Week 2: How do we know what's true?

Week 3: How do we know what's valid?

Week 4: How do we know what's beautiful?

Week 5: How do we know what's right?

Students met three times each week. On day one, students considered the key terms in relation to a spectrum of objects and concepts from the world around them. On day two, students explored the concept in readings of short text or series of passages. On day three, students worked to connect the key terms to the discipline of their Area I course and compared it across disciplines.

The teaching techniques among the participant teachers were similar. Also, Area II teachers had common objectives across the board; it became evident to me that these educators worked together to plan their lessons with the same objectives. Edison shared Area II class objectives for the summer hoping his students would be able to:

- Understand complex, mutable, and historically contingent categories that might initially seem obvious, unchanging, and trans-historical;
- Make distinctions between evidence-based argument and mere opinion;

- View knowledge less as a series of stable ideas passed seamlessly from teachers to students than a network of interconnected clusters of ideas that emerge in dialogue with peers, teachers, and the history of knowledge;
- Understand more fully and engage more thoughtfully the ideas of others, even when they disagree with those ideas; and
- See more clearly, question more thoroughly, and choose more wisely the assumptions on which they ground their ideas and arguments

Democracy in education motivates teachers to set objectives that help students understand how our systems of beliefs are shaped in the same way language and knowledge are constructed (Kincheloe, 2008). Words are a powerful tool and they determine the effectiveness of a lesson. Here, I share one example of how one of a participant teacher uses a children's story to help students expand their thinking about words and what they signify.

On the first day of class, Edison created a lesson that was conducive for students to get to know one another and to begin exploring the first big question: How do we know what is real? He started class with a game. When students entered the classroom, the following passage from *Through the Looking-Glass* displayed on the screen:

'Don't stand there chatting to yourself like that,' Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, 'but tell me your name and your business.'

'My NAME is Alice, but __'

'It's stupid enough name!' Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. 'What does it mean?'

"MUST a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.

‘Of course it must,’ Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: ‘MY name means the shape I am__ and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.’

Edison explained to the class that he was using that quote to introduce himself, since the Alices’ books are important to him. Then, he briefly explained the reversal of language/naming that Humpty Dumpty proposes here. He asked the students to develop a Humpty-Dumpty explanation of their own names. Some students started with an actual story/history/meaning about their own name, but after that, Edison urged them into the realm of make-believe. Students shared their secret meaning with small groups. For the next 20 minutes, Edison asked the students to go around the room and explain the made-up meanings of their names. Then, Edison provided a brief explanation,

in Area II we:

1. Think about the underpinning of human knowledge and human argument;
2. Prepare for and respond to required speakers and performances;
3. Find questions that apply across disciplines.

Then Edison explained the overarching question of the course: “How do we know? He then mapped out the five sub-questions that they would be asking: How do we know what’s real? How do we know what’s beautiful? How do we know what’s interesting? How do we know what’s true? And how do we know what’s right?”

For most students, this was their first experience discussing this type of topic. They began to think about the democratic principles set in the class objectives. They began to understand discussions between grounded, evidence-based argument and mere opinion as the lesson progresses. Then Edison engaged the students in an activity, Reality

Rating, followed by a class discussion. The following items were printed in big letters on sheets of paper and taped to the board: us in the room, Harry Potter, a ghost, your soul, the pain of a broken bone, love, a dream, a tree in Sweden, the color blue. Edison also brought to class, a stick (he found outside), a cup full of ice, a covered coffee cup with water in it.

Before the activity began, Edison took a picture of the class and displayed it on an iPad for the remainder of the activity. He also played a synthetic-based kind of background music.

It was interesting to observe how the students rated how real each of these items/concepts/things were, from 0 (least real) to 10 (most real). They briefly talked in small groups, hoping to figure out where the biggest disagreements were and what criteria they were using to determine realness. Afterward, they had a large group discussion that focused on a few of the items, drawing out along the way several contested criteria for the real (material v/s conceptual; visibility v/s invisibility; permanence v/s ephemerality; common argument v/s individual particularity; existence in the mind v/s existence in the world, etc.).

The teacher made an effort to use a variety of items to illustrate his point, leading students to incorporate new vocabulary, develop new ways of looking at an object and questioning the significance of it all. By the end of the lesson, students were questioning the concept of reality and began to ask, “Why do we care about what’s real?” These teaching techniques sparked the students’ curiosity. Edison’s goal was precisely that; he wanted his students to start questioning, paying attention to the world around them, listen

carefully, and start connecting information across disciplines. Students began to think about the concepts and which ones mattered most to them. They viewed knowledge less as a series of stable ideas passed seamlessly from teachers to students than a network of interconnected clusters of ideas that emerged in dialogue with peers, teachers, and the history of knowledge. Students understood more fully and engaged more thoughtfully the ideas of others, even when they disagreed with those ideas; and they began to see more clearly, question more thoroughly, and made more wisely the assumptions on which they grounded their ideas and arguments. It was evident students began to think about how we perceive the world and how it affects the way we live our lives.

Teaching students how to develop their arguments began to flow as the teachers presented various scenarios and facilitated class discussion. Relying to various philosophical pieces, Edison and the other participant teachers engaged their students in thinking deeply about their own perceptions and beliefs. Creating a democratic setting facilitated the way students acquired new knowledge and assimilated the lessons.

As my classroom observations progressed, I began to notice how students began to navigate through the process of unlearning, learning, relearning, reflection, and evaluation. These powerful actions in the students became alive as they freed themselves and began to build character. Edison, Sofia, Catherine and Christian used similar teaching techniques to push students to think critically. In the beginning of week two, Edison and Sofia presented the students with Plato's allegory of the cave as a pivot point between the previous discussion of reality and the discussion of truth. By the end of the class session,

students began to think about the Cave as one model of education, truth, and knowledge, but also about the role of education, media, and books in generating truth.

For instance, Edison, presented the question: Is truth transmitted, or is it constructed? Students worked together in small groups to read the handout about the allegory of the cave (see Appendix D). Then, each group worked together to draw a visual representation of what Socrates had described. After 20-25 minutes, each group went to the front of the room and displayed their visual representation. They described their image and the class talked about which parts of the allegory were most important and how groups decided which to include. In a large group discussion, the teacher played Welles' video animation of the allegory of the Cave. Then they talked about the method of animation, asking students to think about: Does it do justice to the allegory? How are the ideas changed when they are animated? Is the video more like a shadow of the thing itself, or like the thing itself? Then, the class talked about the allegory itself: What is represented by each component of the allegory? What are the implications of the allegory if we think of it as primarily about education? As primarily about truth? In students' visual representations, where does Plato put the truth? Would any student in the classroom locate the truth somewhere else in the diagram?

These teaching techniques allowed students to think critically, under democratic pedagogical conditions for students to appropriate the knowledge and the skills necessary to question the world in a different way. A democratic classroom aids teachers and students to practice agency to address the issues of justice inside and outside the classroom. These lessons were complemented by the evening seminars and class projects

that were usually connected to social justice and equity issues in schools and community.

Participant students echoed the synergy they found among the various learning activities.

John: I think like the phrase, I don't know where I heard it, but whatever, sometimes I go home on the weekends, because I don't live very far from here, so when my parents ask, "what are you learning?" they don't want to hear all the details, they are not that interested. At the same time, like they want to know, so I tell them: It is like critical thinking, hearing all perspectives, like we do all the time, like entertaining an idea, and kind of taking your own ideas, where your stance on idea is. You kind of have to remove that from yourself, and you kind of have to look at it from other points of view. Compare it to the information presented to us . . . um . . . at the same time also recognizing that your ideas have merit too. I don't think that you can completely remove yourself um . . . but to be able to when you have to consider others' points of view is something I do here because there are such a great variety of views.

In a true democratic environment, students feel responsible for listening to everybody's points of view, considering the information presented to them is relevant, engaging, and new to them. The classroom experience becomes enjoyable because their voices are represented and heard and valued. Jackie, a student, acknowledged this sentiment:

In some ways it is to get a better understanding. Like there were a lot of topics that I never thought of it the way fellow classmates or the instructor shows it and you go: Oh that is new! And we can toy with it, play with it and like consider what other people think of it and like what I think and then resolve the issue and come to conclusions on what you believe in and it is based on information you have never been exposed to before.

The interviews helped me establish a better understanding of the students' perspectives and to view their experience through their eyes. By experiencing and following the democratic principles of education, students were able to examine various topics, while

respecting, listening and learning from one another. When asked: What are you learning here? Christian's students stated,

Miranda: How to be a better person.

Michael: How to view critically in the world we live in.

Parker: How to morally define human.

Lorena: How to be aware of what is going on.

Talia: How to appreciate the small things.

Brendan: How to respect other's ideas.

Cesar: How to contribute to your community and society.

Emma: This is sappy, you guys!

Class laughs!

Teachers created lessons intended to engage all students. They agreed to incorporate readings, videos, guest speakers, free write, grouping, note cards, journals, essays, and projects, among others, to illustrate and help students assimilate the academic material. Class discussions were led by curricular design, and students had the space to think creatively as they developed their own ideas that contributed to the lesson. Teachers reflected upon their practice in order to internalize teacher biases, students' backgrounds, and curricula at hand while pushing themselves to be reflective and to be reflexive.

Reflection and Reflexivity

In a democratic classroom, it is difficult to imagine applying critical pedagogy without exercising reflection and reflexivity from all parties involved. Teachers,

operating from a critical pedagogy lens, expanded their perspectives in order to evaluate current practices and plan new directions in the classroom. Reflection allowed teachers to think carefully about their practice, actions, processes, and procedures to gain insight, understanding, and also plan for future lessons. Reflexivity, on the other hand, is a critical reflection on how teachers, students, the classroom and topic of interest interact, and influence each other. This includes examining one's personal and theoretical biases to see how they serve as resources for producing a particular outcome, for acting in particular ways, and for developing particular interpretations (Glesne, 2011). Reflexivity is an awareness critical pedagogues develop through constant self-assessment and asking questions of themselves to better identify the impact of their teaching practice on their students.

Participant teachers created a democratic classroom with the premise that everyone deserves to be part of the creation and development of the class. Everyone is unique, so each student learns in a different way. By supporting the individual development of each young person within a safe, caring classroom community, democratic education helps students learn about themselves and engage with the world around them. When critical pedagogues reflect on their teaching practice, they are able to ask themselves questions to help them direct their teaching in a more unbiased way.

Catherine stated,

Oh! Yea! Well um, well I will say that critical pedagogy is . . . um a couple of things, I would say that in one way it is a body of scholarship that helps teachers to think differently about the way they are teaching, to be more reflective about what they are doing, to think about the relationship between education and the surrounding political context, and to think about how they can align education

with movements for social change or can align education with social justice, or can be even being attentive to issues already present within education or impacting education that might speak for a need for social justice.

I observed teachers monitor their language, body language, eye contact, listening skills and personal approaches to teaching. Participant Teachers made their personal perspectives clear when discussing their teaching techniques. They consciously presented students with enough information and provided a safe environment where they could explore and develop their ideas freely. Related to this Edison said,

I do have biases and they inform my teaching, I mean we all do, I mean I don't have anything against biases but um . . . I sort of recognize that my biases can be threatening to students, right? So, I think I try to manage biases more for the way it shapes students' ideas. I worry about the idea of me indoctrinating people.

Reflecting upon teaching practices was a common behavior among the participants. They expressed deep concern for fairness, being truthful, listening, taking chances, and using their emotions to inquire into their assumptions and construct new questions through the process of examining previous views and perspectives.

Expectations

Going into the study, I expected to see a more structured environment, where students would behave in class much like they do in a regular public high school. The classroom arrangement, class dynamic and level of participation was nothing like I expected. All participants agreed that this environment was conducive for exploring a variety of topics in a relaxed, friendly, and non-threatening environment. Every class I observed had democratic rules in place and a similar setting. Students were sitting in a

circle, and they chose their seats. In some instances, the students preferred to sit on their desks or on the floor. In Edison's class, there were times when students laid down on the floor and participated. In some instances, Edison and Catherine sat with the students on the floor during class discussion. All students addressed the teachers by their first name, and the teachers dressed casually. At first, this set up was very intriguing to me. I wondered how it was going to work, how respectful the students would be and whether they would be able to actively participate in class. My findings show that students and teachers were very much engaged throughout the entire teaching and learning experience.

Conclusion

The established democratic principles, class rules and expectations of all members involved invigorated the teaching and learning experience. The narratives in this chapter also suggest that involving students in setting class rules and expectations contributed to the positive class dynamic. For all teachers the freedom and trust from all parties involved in the creation of lessons, and the teaching techniques and interactions, promoted democratic engagement. The findings in this chapter are consistent with the literature consulted, by creating democratic classroom learning environment and sharing the power, teachers were able to help students question the world, beyond the world they are familiar with and made clear how classroom knowledge, values desires, and social relations are always implicated in power (Giroux, 2011). As a result, teachers and students enjoyed the process of teaching and learning.

The findings in this chapter also suggest that democracy aided by trust and freedom, as administrators and school authorities relinquish the power and let teachers

create and shape their own teaching practices; education presents new possibilities in the secondary classroom. This is in agreement with Kincheloe's (2008) claims that when standardized testing and curricular standardization are in place possibility decreases that students will gain the confidence to reshape their relation to power or reshape power's relationship to them.

The learning experiences reflected the effective teaching practices of all five critical pedagogues in a safe, democratic and engaging environment. I observed how democracy in the classroom facilitates and supports the development of skills that helped students question, analyze, critique and explore the possibilities for challenging the social order.

CHAPTER V
**INCORPORATING STUDENTS' FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE "HIDDEN
TREASURE"**

According to Moll (2011), funds of knowledge or "hidden treasures" are the home and community resources that students bring into the classroom. The teacher participants in the study all made intentional efforts to incorporate students' home lives into their teaching to gain a thorough understanding of their students. Existing teacher practices in traditional high school settings (public schools, divided into grades and governed by school districts) tend to alienate students of color from their language, culture and resources, underestimating what students are able to manifest intellectually (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011). Teachers must abandon the standard, drill-based approach so often used with students and in its place, Moll (2011) urges teachers to help students find meaning, by developing critical thinking skills and engaging in meaningful dialogue, rather than learning isolated facts and rules. He also advises teachers to use activities that "involve students as thoughtful learners in socially meaningful tasks" (p. 6). In this chapter, I discuss how the teachers drew upon these funds of knowledge and made connections to the classroom curriculum and how students from various backgrounds responded to issues dealing with equity and social justice.

The Southern School of Arts is comprised of primarily White, economically privileged students; their experiences with education are distinctly different than those traditionally marginalized students, who typically feel disconnected from a meaningful

educational experience. At the SSA, there were only a small number of students of color, many of whom were bilingual. These students brought a wealth of knowledge as well as their White counterparts, but the manner in which these two groups experienced the SSA classroom was very different. All students, but particularly the traditionally marginalized, learned about diversity and felt included. They also learned to appreciate and honor their heritage. The dominant students learned about their privilege, oppression, power, inclusion, and how to be mindful of value judgments. Both groups of students underwent a transformation that contributed to their identities as social change agents. In this chapter, I explain how teachers worked with these two distinct groups of students and how they engaged them as they learned about their privilege or lack of it, through various teaching techniques and activities. The teachers in the study realized that they needed to understand the students' distinct strengths and challenges and adjusted their teaching accordingly. Furthermore, teachers led class discussions and engaged students in activities that facilitated their transformation.

I discuss some of the activities that teachers used to get to know and engage all students I also explain how teachers bridged the gaps among students' social, cultural and historical understandings and how the students' experiences influenced their views. I reveal how teachers became learners and learners became teachers and the importance of funds of knowledge at various points in the summer. In addition, I describe the way the participant teachers collaborated with one another to create curricula that used funds of knowledge as a teaching tool and the role of justice to understand controversial issues affecting our society. Finally, I explore how teachers prepared students to become change

agents as they transported their newly acquired knowledge to their homes, schools and communities.

At Southern School of Art, teachers were mindful of their students' backgrounds and funds of knowledge. Participant teachers considered the role that students' socioeconomic backgrounds played, the cultural wealth they possessed, and the connections students made between their home lives and academic learning, and used that to open new paths for connecting the learner to the curriculum. The implications of knowledge, according to their social and historical contexts were crucial in understanding students' backgrounds, family histories, hometown communities, and demographics. Teachers tapped into students' personal skills to empower them through effective lessons. Teachers at Southern School of Art did not live in the same community of the students. This represented a disadvantage for the teachers because they did not have firsthand experiences with the students' hometowns and schools. The students attending the summer school program represented various towns from all over the state comprised primarily of White students with some Black, Asian and Latino students and very few from other ethnicities. The majority of teachers were also White. There were very few teachers of color and none participated in my study. Teachers made an effort to design lessons that represented everyone in the room and also those who were not represented. The data showed how the lack of diversity was problematic at times for these educators and how they managed to teach by bringing awareness and clarity to taboo topics traditionally not discussed in public schools.

The following sub-themes illustrate how funds of knowledge helped teachers enact critical pedagogy in the classroom: (a) Understanding students' backgrounds was crucial for teachers to effectively teach their students; (b) Building community allowed teachers and students to make best use of all the resources available to them; (c) The lack of diversity in the student population was problematic if teachers failed to use funds of knowledge to bridge knowledge gaps through meaningful activities; (d) Going on field trips was an engaging way to expose students to communities; and (e) Relating history to the present contributed to a deeper understanding of societal issues. Through collaboration and the use of students' "hidden treasures," participant teachers contributed to the transformation of all students which, in turn, led to the students' desire to transport their newly acquired knowledge to their homes and communities.

Knowing Students' Backgrounds

Teachers in the study believed that they must learn about their students' backgrounds in order to develop lesson plans that would foster students' trust in their teachers. According to Moll (2011), knowing students' backgrounds facilitates understanding of their lived experiences, what their beliefs are and how they position themselves in the world. The depth of students' multicultural experiences can be very different from one student to another. The participant teachers in my study shared how they got to know their students during the summer program which is very short, compared to a semester or yearlong course they may teach somewhere else. Therefore, it was essential to take advantage of every opportunity to ask relevant questions to get to know the students. Even though this summer program was designed for five and a half

weeks, it allowed teachers to learn about their students in different settings because students and teachers both resided on campus. This arrangement opened various paths for communication and interactions that allowed teachers to get to know their students in a less traditional environment. Teachers used dialogue to engage students from the first moment they arrived on campus. There were interactive games and assemblies designed as icebreakers to get to know one another. Teachers used written and verbal questionnaires to ask personal questions that helped shed light on the students' home lives and personal histories. In the classroom, teachers began their lessons with provocative questions to engage their students in personal dialogues that facilitated the use of funds of knowledge.

Building Community

Teachers planned several activities that helped them get to know their students from the beginning of the summer and made an effort to personalize instruction around their student's personal needs. Teachers shared some personal information about their identities, family, and background information that set the stage for students to ask questions and motivate them to share information about themselves. The depth of the personal questions progressed according to the academic Area in which the students were involved. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, students attended various classes that helped them develop various skills. To recap, these are classes that attract students possessing various academic fields. For instance, Area I classes are the core class in which the student were accepted to participate due to their high academic performance. Teachers from all Area classes designed curriculum to help students make connections in

the classroom to their own lives and communities. Teachers felt challenged when students had a difficult time seeing the relevance of the material presented to them and why it mattered. The abstract ideas presented in Area II classes, asked students to examine their received knowledge and deeply held beliefs, pay attention to functioning of language in the development of ideas and societies, and investigate the very nature of thought and of the mind. Some topics students had discussed previously, because many of these students had taken Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes and had been exposed to these ideas before. Area II teacher, Sofia, stated:

These are abstract ideas I think that . . . um . . . I mean these are things these kids have talked about before at their schools, right, because they are smart they are in AP classes, but I think the other thing is going back to why does it matter? That is a problem for them. Like why should I care about what is real, like at the end of the day I am like going to the cafeteria to get some food, I am going to area I to meet with people, like this doesn't matter because this is my reality at this point.

Sofia shared some of her own personal stories with her students to help them see how the topics covered in class do matter and to help them think differently about them. When sharing about her own personal struggles, the teacher put herself in a vulnerable position that motivated students to share their own experiences. Sofia continued:

The challenge for me is to help them make those critical connections. I share how my socioeconomic background affected my education. When I was little, I would go home to an empty house. My mom worked two jobs to support us. There was nobody home to help me do my homework. I notice how students want to share their own experiences after I model by sharing mine.

The idea of communicating openly with the students set the tone for a more meaningful lesson. Students seemed more likely to open up, share their own lived experiences and

connect the course material to their home, school and community. Sofia elaborated further,

So that is a challenge! I think that um again making connection is a challenge for them between areas I, II and III's. And I think um . . . making connections to their own lives . . . it is difficult so I think part of my job is to like try to make those linkages apparent, or at list lead them to finding that out, leading them into a space to find it out.

Teachers understood that all students possessed knowledge that could contribute to the classroom. For instance, they did use “Resource-based pedagogy” (Moll, 2015), which enables teachers to engage with the sociocultural background of the students and by changing the teacher’s positionality from teacher to learner. The majority of students at SSA were predominantly White; they brought a variety of lived experiences as they may struggle with class identities, gender identities, able identities, and racial identities.

Critical pedagogues need to be mindful of the fact that all students have diverse identities, some of which are privileged and others not. During Christian’s first interview I asked him what he thought the students brought to the classroom. He stated,

Simply having conversations with the students about what is going on at home, or what are you interested in or what type of music do you listen to, or um what kind the media you consume, can open up great conversation to who they are as a person and learn about what they bring . . . Um, so for example if a student sitting in the back row but cannot afford eye glasses, it is going to be very difficult for him/her to pay attention to what is written on the board. So that is a very subtle disadvantage a student can bring to the classroom; unless you are actively urging them to connect with you in a professional sense but also in a personal sense, so helps me understand what is going on in their lives, so I can help bridge those gaps . . .

Christian was passionate about connecting with students; he believed that the time spent getting to know the students was foundational so that later he was able to use that knowledge to identify appropriate materials best suited for each particular group of students. Participant teachers explained that learning about their students' personal lives facilitated classroom rapport, which led to better communication. Christian stated,

Otherwise I would never be able to know why they are not getting ahead because they cannot see the board, or if something happen that day. Also I am not going to know everything that they bring to the classroom, whether that is a divorce that happened the night before with their parents, if they had to work to help support the family . . . things like that; I have to learn as much as possible from them.

I observed that this kind of information served to guide teachers when planning their lessons, and helped build community. For instance, one morning Christian brought a bag of bagels and cream cheese for the class to share. He began class by asking "Expectations, what are expectations? Did you expect me to bring you breakfast?" Students immediately engaged as they began to think about the question and the bag of bagels. Christian steered the dialogue by explaining that sometimes our expectations are based on our lived experiences. Students began to connect social expectations, what they are conditioned to think when they saw the bagels, food, celebration, something special, etc., and the role their previous experiences played when experiencing those thoughts. They began to question expectations and what it meant to make assumptions. The students agreed that when discussing expectations and assumptions all of them could relate. Society had conditioned them to think in certain way, they associated the food the teacher brought to positive experiences from their life. Some teachers and classmates

would bring food to celebrate a holiday or someone's birthday. If it happened more than once, they would expect it before a holiday or a birthday. They said that perhaps in the future they would assume the teacher would bring food again if there was a special occasion. The teacher reassured them that he was celebrating their community, how well the class was going. There was a clear sense of community; students participated with ideas people have about SSA students, gender, race, class, and the various types of privileges people have. Some students stated how they are privileged to be part of the SSA and how happy they felt attending classes.

Christian reminded his students about the concept of privilege, "it refers to any advantage that is unearned, exclusive, and socially conferred." He shared the results of a social experiment, in which participants were asked to close their eyes and picture a drug dealer. When asked to describe what they saw, almost 95 percent mentioned a black person, even though the vast majority of drug dealers in the U.S are White. Christian then asked,

Christian: Can ableism be a privilege?

Anna: People on wheel chairs, well in our campus no.

Joe: Our campus is not really conducive for unable bodies. One can question the school expectations.

Kara: It is like expecting, in public schools, that all kids finish their test in the same amount of time.

Anna: Unfortunately, with standardized testing it implies that if you cannot complete the test within certain amount of time, you are less intelligent.

Joe: My brother is in a wheelchair, when people listen to him play the piano without knowing about his disability, they don't say much. After they learn about his condition, they try to compensate by giving him a lot of praise. I am not sure if that is a privilege!

Christian provided students with a traditional example of privilege in our society. The students began to make connections that are not usually thought of as examples of privilege; they were connecting the concept to their own personal lives. Because the majority of students are White at the SSA, students began to question the implications of the program. Student Rose stated, "I think that we are privileged here. I don't see many students of color in our classes." Lack of diversity can be problematic for teachers as they find obstacles addressing issues of privilege and historic disenfranchisement, but diversity is much more than skin color.

Lack of Diversity

All participant teachers agreed that students of color were underrepresented at SSA. They also made clear that diversity is not just about racial and cultural background, simply because students are visibly similar does not mean they are homogeneous. These teachers are thinking about all aspects of students' identity: ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, country or region of origin, age physical ability, family background, sexual orientation, educational history, physical appearance, learning style. They think that teachers should plan their lessons considering all aspects of students' identities that influence who they are in the classroom.

All teachers believed that traditionally at SSA White privilege has contributed to perpetuating access to those few, mostly White students while denying access to students

of color. Southern families would send their children and later their grandchildren to attend this school, creating a family tradition. Later, the program evolved and it became more inclusive by encouraging students of color to apply, and by involving school district authorities to help select the students who would attend. In addition, the SSA introduced a \$500.00 tuition fee for the first time in 2010 after a reduction in funds from the state General Assembly. Participants believe that the introduction of tuition adversely impacted the number of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who were nominated for and attended SSA. This fee is out of reach for some working-class families. There were some available scholarships but there remained students who still had to work over the summer months and could not afford to attend school. Catherine was concerned about the number of students who may not have access to the school. Catherine emphasized,

Still this is not an issue that I want to conflict with race um, but there are a disproportional number of people of color in poverty, so it must be something going on with it. I think that there are a lot of people, a lot of students here who are pretty like middle or upper middle class so um . . . even if they are coming from public schools.

Since SSA established a tuition fee of \$500.00 per pupil, it had an adverse impact on low socioeconomic income students who are not signing up to participate. In my interview with Catherine, she explained that the tuition fee has impacted diversity because it affects the students who have to work over the summer. Catherine sees a correlation between race and economic wealth. She believes that the increase in tuition has kept many students from participating in the program and it reflects in her classes. She added that

historically, SSA has differentiated itself from privately funded summer programs by providing equal opportunities for academic growth to gifted students from all income levels. Catherine insist that if the state cannot find a way to keep the path to SSA open to low-income students, the program will drift from this purpose. In Catherine's view, "In light of these facts, I hope that the state removes the tuition charge or expands scholarship programs for students from low-income families."

Lack of racial diversity is an issue that participants considered to be important when teaching about inequity and social justice issues. It is difficult to teach to a predominantly privileged class about issues to which students have difficulties relating. In discussing this issue with Bruno, he shared that he taught at SSA for three years and felt that there was a clear lack of diversity in the school. He stated, "No, I would not consider my classes to be diverse or multicultural, either one, um largely homogenous, mostly White, um had one Hispanic student and I think five Asian students if you are using simplistic labels." He also pointed out how Black students are underrepresented and how this lack of diversity causes difficulty for him as a teacher to cover issues of race and White power with the students. For instance, teaching a predominantly White student population about racial discrimination and trying to get the students' lived experiences in the class discussion is almost impossible. He would much rather get students of color to share their perspectives when discussing these topics. He is forced to reflect on the curriculum and speculate on the possible reasons for the reality of students of color, which limits the authenticity of the lesson. When teaching social studies, he covered the common elements of oppression such as racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism,

anti-Semitism, and ageism. The impact of economic power and control on people of color and women is limiting, controlling and destroying lives. All participants believed it was important not teach about these common elements in isolation because they are all connected. Bruno explained,

Well that is the whole reason of my class! Ok, a lot is the institutions that oppress minorities in America, and not just minorities but also women. Um, we did have a lot of women in my class, but just by looking at systems in America which oppress women and how they are underrepresented and my Southern School of Art's class was a perfect way to study the underrepresentation of the population.

Bruno also highlighted that the problem of diversity is not just among the students, but also among the faculty. He stated that there is a predominantly White teaching staff and that he thought there were a couple of people from other countries, but he was not sure about their exact origin. Catherine shared the same sentiment regarding the lack of diversity in the school. She believed that the lack of diversity was something the school struggled with and attempted to improve. Catherine thought that labeling students "gifted" contributed to the type of students who were recruited to participate in the program. In turn, White students benefited from even the minimal diversity because for the first time, they were exposed to topics that they otherwise would never discuss in their home schools. This is problematic because students of color could not have the same opportunity. Catherine argued,

I think that a benefit to Southern School is that a lot of the students, a lot of the White students in particular, who come here and are not already thinking about these things, will have opportunities to think about it, sort of campus wide teachers are asking a lot of questions about why is it. If you are in an IB or AP programs, you notice that it is predominantly white and your school isn't, then

what is up with that? We have a lot of conversations about that, so while the student body doesn't necessarily reflect the racial diversity that it should, and probably the economic diversity that it should, at least there is an awareness about that, there are conversations about that.

Because the Southern School of Art catered to its predominantly White upper and middle class students, it seemed not particularly welcoming to students of color and their families. The participant teachers believed that the issue of wealth was related to race due to their teaching experiences and students' background information. They believe that through critical pedagogy techniques, they were able to tap into student's funds of knowledge to balance out their personal beliefs and biases that inform them.

Activities that Engage and Bring Awareness

All participants use various games as strategies to get to know the students and by asking the right questions in the form of a game, students are more likely to participate and open up for personal interrogations. Perhaps the nature of non-conventional games served teachers well.

Bruno's students were excited about sharing some of the get-to-know-you class activities. Games served as a good starting point in constructing a democratic classroom experience. Student Kate recalled,

The first thing we did like in Social science, we took a poll basically about our beliefs. It is like; are your views conservative or liberal and then like the next class the teacher gave us an index card and then the next class someone else was getting our card and like four answer choices, like it depended on what the card you had said. So like you couldn't see exactly whose it was. It was nice not knowing where some people stood. So that kind of gave feedback to the teacher about the class as a whole and where they stood on things.

This was an effective way to get everyone involved; students did not fear judgment due to the previously established class rules. Everyone understood that respecting one another's ideas and valuing each individual's points of view was a way of valuing the funds of knowledge each student brought to the room. As the weeks progressed, students' participation became more and more personal, students discussed more openly their ideas and beliefs, opening themselves to recognizing their own misconceptions as teachers continued to present various topics that included marginalization and privilege. Student Sandy emphasized the moment she became aware of her privilege,

In my Area II class we did this thing call "Knowing my privilege," where basically we all stood in a circle and we held hands and one person would say a statement, like "Once in my life time I did not have something to eat for dinner." If you had never felt that way you would step forward and if you had felt that way you would step backward. Going through all of those very personal statements involving privilege, and thinking about it, even if you are not religious, it would show us how people that you wouldn't even think were disadvantaged, were. So that all privilege thing was very interesting. I felt very uncomfortable going into it. It was hard for us to recognize the privileges that we have. Or for the underprivileged kids to openly say some of the disadvantages they have in life. It was very hard. It was a very big bonding experience that we had. It was at the end of the experience, so we had gotten to know each other very well. It was an eye opener!

I began to notice the parallel of wanting to understand more about their similarities and differences that existed between the marginalized students and the privileged students, and how the teachers created their lessons to integrate the marginalized students and to inform the privileged students about their privilege. All students participated openly in these types of bonding activities that began to bring down the walls that students brought

with them, as well as creating community among all participants. According to one of the students, Sarah,

One activity that was life changing for me was when we stood up in a line, to see, according to how much privilege you have. Like this was like at week three, I like the timing of it. It wasn't until I got to this school that I began to understand White privilege, it took me a while to see that. All of the kids shared their stories, and by hearing this I began to understand their setbacks and their struggles in so many different areas. I realized that I did not have any struggles in comparison to these other kids. I never thought about that!

During the students' interviews, I became aware of the classroom activities that really impacted them and the significance of the new awareness they were developing as they gained new knowledge about one another. For students of color, the relaxed and inviting environment facilitated the development of trust, which manifested through their openness to share their personal lives and their ability to participate, by making their voices heard. Student Troy stated,

In my class the teacher invited us to share our backgrounds. You decided how much you wanted to share, but my class was very open. Most people shared a lot about themselves, their hometowns, and family. Everyone felt comfortable to be able to do that. So when discussing issues, social issues, we had a chance to connect them to our personal lives. I kind of like that! My class was open from the beginning to the end. It is rare for me to feel comfortable like that when discussing these issues, particularly racial issues.

All participant teachers strived to develop a new awareness and appreciation for diversity. By engaging in games that tapped into students' funds of knowledge and complemented their democratic teaching techniques, teachers were able to create close-knit communities.

Bridging the Gaps

Teachers don't need to work alone to reach all students; they can seek assistance from entities such as study groups and social networks that can provide input and feedback in creating instructional plans, but as Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) pointed out, it is the teacher who is ultimately the bridge between the students' world, her family's funds of knowledge, and the classroom experience. This is important because teachers have access to resources and people that can provide information about the students. Some students may have Individual Accommodations Plan, designed to help teachers with strategies to reach a student with disabilities, for instance Attention Deficit Disorder or Hyper Activity Disorder. There are various resources teachers can find in the student's community, depending upon the afterschool activities the student is engaged or the family activities in which the student participate.

All teacher participants in my study enjoyed the students because they valued what the students brought to the classroom, their individual academic gifts that allow each student to form part of the experience, and the wealth of personal lived experiences that complement the lessons at hand.

Participant teachers recognized that they were responsible for challenging the traditionally accepted ways of presenting the history to their students. During my conversation with Catherine, we discussed the two great movements for social justice in our country that shifted all aspects of our culture and created some significant changes in education, the civil rights and feminist movements. hooks (2010) wrote about the historical outcomes of social equality, desegregation in schools and the impact of

feminist challenges such as the division of domestic labor, the media stereotypes, the glass ceiling, social inequality, and violence against women among others in a male dominated world. hooks (2010) maintains that

When a critique of race and class was added to that of gender, every bias was interrogated. To progressive teachers and students this was truly a revolution, making it possible for many of us to enter areas of study that were previously seen as arenas available solely to privileged white males. (p. 24)

Teachers welcomed students' stories to question the personal and the political. Sharing and exchanging stories based on the students' funds of knowledge effectively built a community of learners willing to take risks. For example, in Edison's class, students raised the issue of class and race when discussing the issues of equality and equity in this country. Alicia, one of the students, said that she grew up in a poor area in the country side and that the families around her did not have much material wealth at all, but they had their necessities covered. She noted that she never really questioned her financial situation because she felt she had access to everything. However, her experience in SSA had exposed her to a different world, introducing her to opportunities and lifestyles she has not known prior. In contrast, Joe, a student, shared that he grew up in suburbia and had never really seen poverty first hand as he did during the trip he had taken with his class the previous week.

Field Trips

In Area I, the social studies class all collaborated with one another and planed a field trip to the city's East and West sides. The purpose of the field trip was to expose students to the realities of the city's wealthiest and poorest sides. They asked students to

look for a variety of sites such as supermarkets, health centers and green areas, then to notice differences and similarities. They rode on the public city bus. The students were so shocked to see the tremendous differences between the two sides of the same city. Many students expressed their concern and wanted to discuss the correlation between race and poverty. Edison facilitated the conversation as the students began to question the reasons why, in a wealthy nation such as ours, we have so many disparities among people's living conditions. Students wanted to talk about dismantling social inequalities and systems of oppression. The teacher inquired about their experiences and asked them to share their views. One male adolescent student, elaborated on his own personal experience of taking the public bus to study the city. He could not believe the economic inequality among neighborhoods within the same city. This field trip in a public bus was most students' first time riding on public transportation. Student John stated,

It is such small area there are so broad differences between the West and the East side. I don't see it in my town and it is crazy to see it here because you get on the bus one way everything is nice and folks are White and you get on the bus going the other way and things are ran down and people are Black. The differences are huge! It is crazy how 10 minutes from each other, how different the neighborhoods are!

The conversation progressed as the students engaged in analyzing the possible reasons for why poverty affects people, particularly people of color. Many students spoke about how they were mildly aware of such inequities, but they didn't think about it; it was foreign to them. They emphasized that seeing it firsthand completely changed the manner in which they perceived this social problem. They noticed the West side of the city had many stores, health care facilities, security cameras, grocery stores, nice park areas, versus the

East side which had none. The West side was predominantly White and the East side was predominantly people of color. The class agreed that this was a very significant trip because it brought awareness to the issues of race, power, class mobility and equal opportunity. Students also discussed their new awareness about the impact of history in today's society and the American dream. In addition, they began to understand the fact that not all children start life at the same point, with equal resources, and that there are disadvantages when they start school. Funds of Knowledge helped teachers understand the way students acquired new knowledge, their contributions to the conversation and what resources to incorporate as they were planning lessons.

History Affects the Present

In class, Edison steered the dialogue, asking students questions that tapped into their funds of knowledge, allowing them to talk about their own experiences. Edison asked the students: "Have you ever experienced discrimination?" One male adolescent student shared his experience in school during his freshmen year. Paco stated,

I was ignored by my history teacher, I think she thought I was slow or something, she never called on me. Later in the year she questioned my integrity. She thought I was cheating on tests. I just knew the material.

This Latino student was referring to being discriminated against because of his race. His point was that even when he did well academically the teacher didn't acknowledge his hard work and giftedness, questioning his integrity until the end of the semester. Students shared how discrimination was part of their family life. Anne, another student, pointed out that she always argued with her mom about Black people being lazy and not working

hard enough to succeed. Anne explained that her mom believes that the majority of Black people are the ones who collect welfare and take advantage of the government. Anne did not share the same views as her mother. Anne stated, “When mom and I argue, I tell her: Not all of them are lazy! We need to have welfare to help poor people get through the difficult times. We are just lucky we don’t have to go through that.” Other students engaged in dialogue that evolved into examining the issues of equities as children start in life. The students made connections as the teacher guided the discussion helping them clarified their discrepancies but not giving them the answers.

All participant teachers taught terminology so that students could have a shared vocabulary and be better prepared to discuss difficult topics. Participant teachers developed safe spaces for students to discuss and learn about these topics, giving them a new sense of empowerment to be able to teach others about it. Student Liz noted:

Teachers here teach the right concepts, we discussed what gender is, what is sexuality, what is gender preference, the teachers actually teach these things, no topic is taboo here. For example, what is your romantic preference, what is your sexual preference; like she actually . . . like I had never, like these terms are floating around, but like I had never actually been taught what these things are, and actually learning about the correct terminology. Which it was a big part of our discussions! There are so many social problems and discrimination, and it is because there is no education about it. Like we talked about the lack of dialogue there is about these topics.

The teachers facilitated dialogue and the students used their newly-acquired vocabulary to question the views and biases they had experienced throughout their lives. The term segregation was now easily understood; the issues of race, class and gender took on a more profound meaning. Teachers and students spoke passionately about the unfair

distribution of wealth, the lack of education about topics related to sex, class and gender.

In sum, students in the classroom made the personal much more political.

Exposing Students to the Unconventional

Participant teachers believed that students made the class successful when they questioned and participated actively in the discussion and initiated relevant topics and thought them more critically. Students understood the content so well that they were able to teach about this same content in their own ways. During the teacher interview, Edison stated,

Today for example, you saw Peter (a student) explaining this complicated concept of sound frequency to me and the entire class, from instrumental musician's point of view. That benefited the entire group! It was from the presenter from the other day. It was especially helpful because the students have been talking a lot about the speaker who came the other day. I learned from Peter also!

Edison was referring to the musician, Ken Ueno, who came to speak during a seminar session. He became the topic of the opening conversation of the class. Students were confused about the style and purpose of his music performance. Student, Peter, gave a detailed explanation of sound frequency, explaining the difference between frequency and timbre which assisted the teacher in making sense of the artist, and helped explain the performance to the rest of the class. Ken Ueno is not a traditional performer; his work is controversial and made the students think about and critique something that they once saw as conventional—music (http://brcoe-review.s3.amazonaws.com/L&S_W1_Guest_Lecture_Ken_Ueno_v02.mp4).

Edison's class engaged in intense debate as the teacher questioned the class about the techniques the speaker used to attract their attention. He reminded the students about the term rhetoric, originating from Greek, meaning speaker, and how it was used for the art of persuasive speaking or writing. He continued to provide new vocabulary to guide the discussion. Edison stated, "So what ethos, logos and pathos did the speaker use? What are the ways the speaker choose to communicate?" Students tried to make sense of the performance's hidden message and express their opinions about it:

Carina: I agree that all art is search for identity. I consider myself a feminist and my writing serves me to express my identity and beliefs.

Ryan: I thought it was weird but I get it. My impression of the performance was that he is sharing his beliefs of justice, human expression, where the megaphone can be an instrument of protest.

John: For me personally, it pissed me off! It was way too long he making those noises!

Teacher: So, we can safely say that he used ethos, logos and pathos to reach his audience?

Anne: Yes, I felt he was rebelling against all the myths we place on what we consider music and beauty. At the same time he is making us think of the possibilities.

Most students wanted to discuss this particular speaker. It became a vehicle for discussing what we consider beautiful; who determines what art is and what type of human expression is considered valuable. Teachers learned from the students' experiences of their search for identity through artistic expression. Teachers selected this particular performer because they he shared their same simple philosophy of pushing students outside of their comfort zones.

Traveling Opens New Awareness

In Christian's class, students discussed how American history in their public schools did not cover many of the topics they covered during this summer program. They also discussed jobs and experiences that helped shaped the students' lives and their worldviews. One female student, Liz, talked about her trip to Italy and how it changed her perception of the culture and the amazing experiences she had. She was able to tour the country, learn about her family history and enjoy site seeing. She stayed in beautiful hotels, enjoyed shopping in Rome and practiced her Italian. She recognized her privilege as she related the entire trip costing her parent over \$4,000. The teacher guided the discussion, asked some questions related to the Italian culture and learned a few facts he did not know about the traditions. He steered the conversation to encourage those who had not said much throughout the class. In contrast, Diego shared his experiences traveling to Mexico every summer. His trips were not as pleasurable as Liz's, since he had to work in his grandfather's farm to help the family financially. This year his parents decided to take advantage of the scholarship Diego received from his school district to attend the SSA's summer program. Diego spoke about the cultural experiences he had while in Mexico, the poverty he saw there, children that were in the streets selling chewing gum and candy to make a living, and the difficult choices his parents made when they decided to come to the U.S. Diego's desire to help his family and his new appreciation for the Mexican culture grew stronger as he spent summers in Mexico. He said, "I don't think that Americans understand the importance of family and friendships as the Mexican people do." He elaborated that the concept of family is much more

significant in Mexico. He would make any sacrifices to help his family as his father had done since migrating to the United States. Diego passionately shared some of the struggles his father endured, from receiving less than minimum wage for working in a farm, to being treated poorly by White folks; in his view, “My dad had to put up with a lot of discrimination and social injustice, but it was worth it to him to help our family.”

This conversation opened paths for some interesting questions of privilege and cultural experiences that were unique to each individual. The teacher made a point of connecting this discussion with “The Common Elements of Oppression” by Suzanne Pharr. Christian reminded his students that, “This is a chapter of the document. We will analyze the validation of arguments and we will discuss reality, ethics, considering: the argument, what the argument is and how it is constructed.”

Teachers asked for volunteers to read each article of the document and they began analyzing it. Because this document gave an overview of Pharr’s discussion on oppression in the United States and the systematic and organized way it has been used to keep power in the hands of a dominant few, students began to see the common elements of oppression in a more concise way. They explored the tools of oppression such as threats of violence, lack of prior claim, “the other,” stereotyping and blaming the victim, isolation and tokenism. Students questioned the real meaning of oppression as Christian shared how Pharr defined the “isms” (sexism, racism, classism, ageism, etc.) as coming from an oppressive base. This base began with the “defined norm” basically, Caucasian, male, heterosexual, Christian, temporarily able-bodied, youthful, with access to wealth and resources. Christian noted, “An established norm does not necessarily represent a

majority, but those who have the ability to exert control over others.” The classroom enlivened as the students engaged in pair and group discussions. Christian gave them time to process the information and invited them to share their ideas.

One student, Blanche, cited Audre Lorde and the rights of the individual, she discussed then interconnectedness of the various forms of oppression. She argued that depending on our biases to a particular form of oppression, giving one priority over another, we try to solve one before we try to solve another. We instead should not think about various types of oppression as separated from one another, but rather as a whole, which include all forms of oppression. Christian agreed with her and read to the class: “Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gay men are Black and as such, there is no hierarchy of oppression.”

Students shared their views and commented on how there are no hierarchies of oppression as they connected it to their own personal experiences. One female adolescent student shared her mother’s experiences working for a large company in the state and how she actually made less money than her uncle, doing the same type of job. The conversation progressed as the teacher reminded students that Pharr claimed that institutional power is often used to oppress marginalized groups. Christian insisted that, “For instance if women or ethnic minorities had more institutional power, they would have equal pay.” He continued to engage his students as he asked them, “Think about what Pharr claims, there is no such thing as reverse discrimination because this requires institutional power to back it up.”

I enjoyed watching the class discussion, particularly when the students became outraged by the statistics shared by the teacher regarding gender and race in relation to the political power in our nation; for instance, in the U.S. Congress, women are still the minority. One student, Alice, protested saying, “That is why I believe we contribute to the problem, by not doing anything about it.”

When I interviewed this group of students, they were eager to share their new perspectives. Privilege was one issue that the privileged students had never really thought about before, and it helped them understand the points covered in class. Sally stated,

I really never thought about white privilege or really understood what it really means. I never considered myself to be privileged. Now, after all the discussions, and listening to other kids, I have a better understanding of so many topics, like race, gender, gender preference, White privilege and so on. It has been a real learning experience for me.

This particular class stood out because the students progressed from listening attentively, to discussing their own lived experiences, to questioning the system in place, to engaging in analysis and finally realizing the work that still needs to be done in our world. It was lunch time when the class ended, but four students stayed in the room, asking several questions regarding the topics discussed during class time. Christian graciously answered the students’ questions and asked new questions for them to ponder on during lunch with their peers.

Collaboration and “Hidden Treasures”

Participant teachers worked together to share knowledge and create curriculum that was inclusive and that used funds of knowledge as a pedagogical tool. All

participants stated that it was crucial to share ideas and plan the units of studies with other teachers to ensure an educational experience of high quality and significance for all students. Before the summer school program began, teachers met to brainstorm ideas for creating a curriculum that aligned Areas I, II and III. They planned activities and projects that would help students apply their new knowledge and develop their independent thinking. Each participant teacher agreed that all students brought valuable funds of knowledge that contributed to their lesson planning. While many of the students had positive experiences with education, some had difficulties complying with status quo. All participant teachers believed that students internalized rules about education and expectations, and sometimes they needed to unlearn those rules and start anew. For instance, the privileged students had a sense of specialness, which the teachers believed was related to their privilege. It was very important for teachers to help students move away from this self-view and become increasingly critical about why they held that view to begin with. Catherine said,

I always try to carry with me this assumption that students are inherently intelligent and that they know things, that knowledge does not just comes from me, but that it also comes from them, knowing together, so the work is finding out what do we have to work with and the next part of the work is figuring out where are we going to go from there.

Catherine guided her students to write about difficult topics and to share as much or as little with their peers during discussion time. Catherine played music in the background as the students wrote their thoughts in their journals. After a few minutes, students sat on chairs while others sat on the floor in a circle. Catherine decided to join the circle and sat

on the floor with them. Students began discussing ideas about their project or “Inquiry Lab.” Catherine guided them as she listened to the ideas presented, gave them feedback on how to approach their topic, reminding them to apply their critical thinking skills. She also gave them the freedom to choose their topic and encouraged students to think about the research methods they would use: experiments, surveys, interviews etc. She gave students class time to work in groups to do the planning. They had the freedom to move outside the room to plan. Some students went outside, some went to other classrooms and some stayed in the room. This inquiry lab (project) was the culmination of the unit and it gave the students the freedom to choose any topic they had been questioning, gave them the space to research topics they had never explored before, and research it applying the skills acquired in class. The conversations among the students revealed great ideas and insights into their selected topics

The following class, the students brought back their research results. The conversations revealed the topics the students wanted to explore. I will describe some of the research questions and findings.

1. Why are silence and eye contact uncomfortable? (Exploring the concept of awkwardness) They conducted social experiments and found out that it only takes four seconds for silence to get awkward.
2. Another group explored the role of life experiences, what makes you, you? This group investigated positive, neutral and negative emotions and the encoding that takes place in the brain. Emotions increase attention, for instance; do you remember where you were on 9/11?

3. Another group explored happiness, and another group explored political correctness. They decided to investigate the difference between being politically correct versus being offensive. They concluded that the pros of political correctness are: (a) it prevents marginalization, and (b) destroys stereotypes. They concluded that the cons of political correctness are: (a) Color blind racism, (b) Lack of openness, and (c) Suppression of human experience.

The class gave feedback to each group and they asked questions such as: “Maybe there are other ways to pursue freedom and equality by not using cursing words?” (Field notes). This particular group, pointed out that sometimes people need to be offensive to pursue social justice. One of the students, Michael, stated, “There are many misconceptions that we carry from our homes, sometimes we do not realize that we are being racist, sexist, classist; I believe that we need to open the conversation in our schools.”

These projects demonstrated the use of funds of knowledge in a cooperative setting, giving students space to research and present their findings using any tools available to them, such as cameras, recording devices, computers, etc.

Most of the participants agreed that all students possessed “hidden treasures” or funds of knowledge, that include culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diversity. Teachers in my study wanted to learn more about students’ lives outside of school. They wondered about the cultural and linguistic resources which students and their families possess, largely invisible within schools but that could be leveraged for

school learning. Consequently, students' lives, experiences, and knowledge outside of school became of more interest to all participant teachers. Sofia shared some of the issues she faced when teaching the privileged students:

I think a lot of them are very privileged . . . and I think they do not know that. And I think that they experience it but they don't have a language to name it or to talk about it, they may not even know it, but there is a lot they know, they are very smart. I mean they can grasp things that I can't even grasp, about physics, like science, math, other things, and art and theater that I can't, that I don't have the knowledge base.

She was very aware that this was a delicate developmental stage in the students' lives, as they are developing their ideas, their own sense of identity, and their own sense of the world. Because this was the majority of students' first time away from home, they began to see the world through different lenses. Sofia said, "This is their first chance away from their parents so this is the first time they have the time and the space to explore what they really think and not what their parents think." Sofia also believed that SSA, being a boarding school, aided students in experiencing the freedom to explore social justice issues under the umbrella of academic rigor that does not conform to the traditional schooling, which deals with grades and standardized assessments. Teachers at SSA had the freedom to create and teach their classes and not have to formally assess their students. There are no grades and teachers do not have to implement traditional public school mandates that restrict the way and what they teach. The freedom to teach about various topics, particularly social justice issues, gives teachers the opportunity to provide students with meaningful lessons in which they can develop and express their own ideas.

Sofia recalled her own experiences in public school and how she would repeat what her parents' beliefs were, without considering her own beliefs. She never had the opportunity to participate in open discussions that would lead her to develop her own ideas as a young person. It wasn't until she attended college that she began to develop her own ideas and opinions. Sofia was convinced that the earlier the students were exposed to critical thinking and social justice issues, the better their educational experience would be. Sofia emphasized,

So I think that that is important like, I think that when they are away from their parents they have the space to explore. This is important for them because I don't think that they were given that in traditional schools.

In SSA, every class gave students the opportunity to gain new perspectives and explore provocative ideas to question. Teachers exemplified collaboration, respect and democracy, as they valued students' contributions to their lessons. Although the program was only five and half weeks, the participant teachers in the study worked tirelessly towards the goal of all students gaining valuable lessons to impact their own communities. The students appreciated the different perspectives they developed as well as the space given to them to grow.

Transformation

When interviewing Sofia's students, it became clear to me that they had developed new ways of looking at issues and were questioning their own ideas and beliefs. When I asked: What are you learning here? These were some of their responses,

Lucy: We are learning about race and socioeconomic disparities.

Maria: To value our heritage and the heritage of others.

Peter: Making sense of our society, what and why things are generally accepted.

Joe: Dismantling social inequities, systems of oppression . . .

Cara: How healthcare functions, what is fair, understanding social justice and feminism?

Students were eager to challenge the system in place and with new acquired vocabulary; they were able to express themselves, putting into words ideas and beliefs that began making more sense to them. Some students began to discover their own identities through their classroom experiences and through the exposure to various guest speakers. One student reflected on her own experience; she realized she had been repeating her parents' ideas and beliefs rather than exposing herself to other points of view. Janna stated:

I think that it is not so much that I didn't talk about race before, but the fact that my views on it were so ingrained, I think because of all my influences back home. That when you are kind of removed from that setting, here it kind of forces you to develop your own views on it, without those influences, they are still there obviously, from your childhood being raised and went to school with, but not having them in your face at this moment, without that it was easier to look at it from a different perspective. Working together we can figure the stuff out!

Providing students with a philosophical framework helped build a solid base for incorporating vocabulary that in turn became the tool for expression. Critical pedagogues in my study understood and applied the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher. As hooks (2010) reminds educators to find out what the students know and what they need to know, the collaborative

learning process allowed teachers to take the students to a deeper, more significant level of understanding. In the SSA students and teachers used their funds of knowledge to discuss pressing issues and to bring awareness about marginalization. For example, student Henry stated,

I realize that most people think; you can work hard and get out of poverty, but a lot of people don't have the opportunities. I don't think people realize that. It is really hard to be born into poverty, and not have opportunities, it is something I wouldn't know because I had a lot of opportunities, but like I said before, here I have been able to take myself out of situations as a privilege person. I realize I really don't know what is like to struggle. It is very difficult to escape that! Socio-economic class, many naively believe that we have this so call "American dream," now I have a different perspective.

Teachers were able to teach about privilege and help the privileged students include and value the marginalized through activities that promote inclusion and cultural and language understanding.

Inclusion is Key

Teachers at SSA were always seeking for ways to help students make connections to their lived experiences, to include different perspectives and to help them make sense of their own way of experiencing the world. In Sofia's class, students discussed the meaning of truth. They had analyzed Plato's Allegory of the Cave and how truth has multiple definitions. The students discussed the coherence theory, which describes truth in terms of interconnected belief. A belief is true if it consistent with other beliefs we have. The correspondence theory describes truth in terms of relation concepts or propositions have to the actual world. They also considered postmodernism, which lays out a view of truth in terms of individual perspectives and community agreement. As I

observed the students' ideas come alive, stimulated by the readings, I noticed how interested they became to discuss the topic of truth and how it relates to life.

Annie: So two people can see the same thing and have a complete different opinion of it. It is really hard to change someone's mind sometimes.

Jill: It is difficult when you grow up knowing the truth according to your own home life. How can you face truth according to others when you were taught otherwise?

Sofia: Sometimes truth can be hard. Now tell me after reading the article from last night, does language really affect the way we interpret the world?

Sofia had assigned a reading of an article featured in the New York Times, titled: Does Your Language Shape How You Think? The article covered the outcome of studies that have been done that confirm the idea that the way we interpret the world has much to do with our mother tongue. Sofia and her students explored how truth is connected to language and perception. Students were interested in discussing one particular experiment done with Spanish and French speakers, they were asked to assign human voices to various objects in a cartoon. When the French speaker saw a picture of a fork (la fourchette), most of them wanted it to speak in a woman's voice. Spanish speakers preferred a deep male's voice, because el tenedor is a masculine noun in Spanish. Students were intrigued by the study because it also mentioned that recently, psychologists have even shown that gendered languages mark gender traits for objects so strongly in the mind that these associations obstruct speakers' ability to give information to memory. Students continued to question:

Anne: I never thought about the impact language has on people. Pedro, do you agree with what this article is saying?

Pedro: Well, honestly I did not think about my first language that way before. I realize now that I tend to see the world a bit differently; everything in my mind has an assigned gender when I think in Spanish. I don't think the same way when I am thinking in English, ha, ha, ha . . .

Joe: Of course, I agree that language must play a role on how we see the world, what we believe to be true. I struggle in my Spanish class; I always mess up the gender of nouns!

Liz: Well, if the article is true, then we could speculate that our perception of everything is rooted on the way the world is presented to us since birth. The first language we speak will determine pretty much everything.

Pedro: I do notice how much influence my mother language, my culture, my family and traditions have in the way I see the world. It is neat to be able to share my language and culture with you guys. I do appreciate the advantages of being bilingual.

Joe: Yea man! You are in great position; you can communicate with more people and understand both cultures. I am taking Spanish IV next year. I want to go to Argentina some day and I hope I become bilingual like you in the future!

Students were appreciating not just the fact that language plays a role on the way we perceive the world, but also the students were expressing appreciation for language and culture other than their own; that is one way that some of the students who would have felt marginalized felt valued and included.

Sofia made it clear to the class that the habits of the mind that our culture has instilled in us from infancy shape our orientation to the world and our emotional responses to objects we encounter, and their consequences go far beyond what has been experimentally demonstrated so far; they may also have marked on our beliefs, values and ideologies. Students agreed that it was necessary, we must not assume that everyone

thinks alike, as Anne said, “We must remember that we all think differently therefore our ideas are not going to be the same.” The less privilege students were sharing about their lives more openly as they experienced inclusion; they began to value themselves for who they are and to honor their heritage.

The class discussions covering a variety of topics assisted students with the development of new ideas and perspectives that impacted their views. For instance, when discussing the topic of health care. There were negative beliefs around the class about the Obama Health Care program, created to help people. During the class discussion, the negative ideas began to crumble as the students listed to the pros and cons that addressed each issue in their respective classes. The language, the terms, the evidence, the arguments and the ability to listen to one another and consider one another’s truth seem to be effective in changing their ideas and perspective about a controversial topic such as health care. In my interview with students it was evident the ideas students brought to school were changing dramatically. Student Kim agrees when she says,

I was presented with so much information, about how much damage those opposing beliefs can actually cause instead of helping people to get the care that they need. I think that, that was a major shift for me. Like the whole idea of access, something that I may access and that you may not have access to where you are standing. Now, I would tell people that once you hear all the ideas, Obama care was generous, because at the same time like it is working towards what a lot of people would consider an ideal system.

Difficult topics call for teachers to plan accordingly and to guide their students to find answers through critical dialogue. Participants shared some of their concerns when planning their lessons because they think their students, to some extent, are deficient in

their abilities or dispositions that would allow them to discern certain kinds of inaccuracies or distortions that limit their thinking. During my interview with Edison we discussed the importance of guiding class discussions that include all points of view and help students resist power effects to social issues. Edison stated,

I don't want to indoctrinate students. I try to include every single student in class discussions. I try to give them the freedom to discover how society is divided by relations of unequal power. They do discuss these issues in class, they are smart, they can figure out how cultural formations in general perpetuate or legitimate injustice.

Teachers and students became fully engaged, collaborating together and finding answers to their questions. As a result, students were able to distinguish inequities and distribution of wealth in many different social arenas. Listening to other's ideas became the way for students to push one another toward developing social consciousness rooted in themes of social justice.

Justice for All

In order to have a long-lasting impact on students' learning experience, teachers relied on sharing personal experiences to illustrate their topic and to invite all students to participate in discussion. Assigned readings helped teachers introduce a subject to the students and the class discussion helped clarify it. The topic of discussion in Christian's class was based on the question: what does it mean to make assumptions? He started class with that question and students engaged immediately, shouting out their answers. Student, Loren said, "Like if you are in SSA you must be smart." The students had been

working on small projects to showcase the essence of the question and how people set expectations based on social standards that are socially constructed.

The teacher played a video that one group of students had made to prove the meaning of “gender identity.” The video shows a girls’ bathroom. You see a girl looking at herself in the mirror. It shows the feet and high heel shoes of a female in the stall. Then another girl walks into the bathroom. The female who was in the bathroom stall, walks out and washes her hands. She is not a woman but a man dressed like a woman. She exits the bathroom. One girl tells the other girl, “I thought this was the ladies bathroom. Was that a girl?” The other girl responded, “Yes, I think so.” Christian then introduced the terms: identity and gender. Students begin to discuss the meaning of these new words. Christian helped the students process the ideas as he said: “This is like a metaphor, like when we use a term and we think that the other person does understand the term.”

They continued analyzing the work done on the videos that demonstrated various assumptions people make, sometimes lacking basic understanding of and use of appropriate terminology. Students used their knowledge of social norms and considered how this knowledge impacted their way of thinking and judging others. They spoke about the small communities where they came from and how people were concerned with everyone’s personal business. They pointed out the role of the church as an entity that sets standards of social religious beliefs that influences human behavior. They expand their dialogue on gender norms and came up with examples that clarified the ideas presented in class. One student talked about the social pressures he experienced in his town. Mark stated, “Gender norms, like if you are a guy and you don’t have a girlfriend

or a girl doesn't have a boyfriend; you feel the pressure coming from society." Another student, Carla, said, "Like if you are gay or lesbian, you have a more difficult time showing affection in public because of the social pressures." Another student asked: "Isn't that a form of oppression?" Through their observations of social expectations, they relayed powerful messages through their short videos and dissected important themes affecting our society.

The topic of oppression captured the students' attention. The teacher made it clear that it was impossible to look at the topic of oppression in isolation because all forms of oppression are interconnected. Christian asked students to name some of the forms of oppression from their personal experiences. He had previously introduced some of these concepts and students were quick to put them into context. Christian wrote on the board as the students named various forms of oppression: "racism, homophobia, classism, ableism, anti-Semitism, ageism," then he explained to the class that these are linked by a common origin—economic power and control and by common methods of limiting, controlling, and destroying lives. A student asked: "Which one is more prevalent?" "All of them, each one is terrible and destructive," Christian replied.

The conversation progressed as students discussed the importance of eliminating not one but all forms of oppression. If not, they realized that success will always be limited and incomplete. Students began to apply their own knowledge as they pointed out the relationship between institutional power and economic power. The teacher directed the conversation and asked a student to read element #5 from last night's reading:

In order to be controlled by a single group of people, there must be economic power. Earlier I discussed the necessity to maintain racism and sexism so that people of color and women will continue to provide a large pool of unpaid or low-paid labor. Once economic control is in the hands of a few, all others can be controlled through limiting access to resources, limiting mobility, limiting employment options.

Students and teacher exchanged ideas about the significance of the words written by Suzanne Pharr. They understood that by questioning these ideas they were beginning to find answers. Christian asked, “Does anyone have ideas about economic power?” Students shouted various ideas, one student said: “Illegal aliens” as another student says: “Such dehumanizing term!” Clearly students were becoming more sensitive to the language they used. They were teaching one another, applying new skills for healthy debate and questioning issues that affect us all.

Student, Maria, referred to the problem of crossing borders as an undocumented person. She explained the horrors of experiencing oppression through working for miniscule wages and facing deportation. She pointed out the problem for the children of undocumented families, who were brought to this country as babies and to the children who were born here. The only country they know is the United States. Maria argued: “People don’t understand that they are innocent and deserve a chance.” Maria continued her argument, referring to the Dream Act created by President Obama in 2012. She explained, “It grants deferred deportation to people under 31 who came to the U.S under age 16 and meet other criteria.” The class continued asking questions as Maria explained that if these people met the criteria and qualified, they would be allowed to be in the U.S legally, apply for employment authorization and receive a Social Security number. Maria

said that you can also receive a driver's license in every state but Nebraska. She also explained that the Dream Act provided legal presence, but not legal status to undocumented people. It only lasted two years, but could be renewed. Christian did not know all these details, but he thanked Maria for sharing this information. It was the end of class and as students began to leave to go to lunch, Christian encouraged them to continue the conversation over lunch. Some of the students stayed, asking questions and discussing ideas with the teacher.

As students embarked in questioning and dismantling of previously held assumptions, their ideas and perspectives progressed. The interactions between teachers and students were open and casual, facilitating the exchange of information. Each of the participant teachers built the funds of knowledge approach by developing a pedagogy that resonated with the students and was academically rigorous.

Transporting Knowledge to Family and Community

Christian began class with one word for student to ponder. For instance, he would say "Truth" then asked students to think about: "What are some truths that you discovered over the break?" He invited the students to think about it. Students were sitting in a round circle and students began sharing their thoughts: "My name is Jan and I discovered over the break that homesickness is real." The next student said: "I discovered that I need to become a civil rights lawyer. There is a lot of injustice out there and I would like to work towards helping people." April said, "I discovered that I am a feminist and I didn't even know it." Students continued sharing their ideas and discoveries about

themselves. The dialogue served as a warm-up for discussing the universal values of what we consider to be right or wrong.

As they sat in a circle, the teacher shared a personal experience about choosing a career and how his parents wanted him to study medicine, but he decided to become a teacher. He disappointed his parents when he became a teacher, but he had to be true to himself. Students had been studying “truth and reality” and now Christian was inviting them to connect those terms to the terms: good, bad, right, and wrong. He invited the students to free write and gave them the topic: “Consider a time when you witnessed or learned of a situation that was quite clearly wrong/bad and why it was clearly wrong/bad?” Students began to write while the teacher walked around the room and reminded them, “You may share what you write but if you don’t want to, of course, you don’t have to.” He continued to walk around. When the writing time was over, the teacher requested that students share their thoughts with the people around them. Students shared and began to consider the role of morality.

Students discussed how some people may perceive something as wrong but if it is not viewed that way by others, it may not be wrong. The conversation escalated into a philosophical, ethical discussion as they weighed in the pros and cons of subjectivity. The students expressed their opinions as the teacher wrote key words on the board such as: obligations, emotions, concrete, subjectivity, and morality. One student said: “Good things and bad things are kind of subjective.” Everyone in the room had something to contribute; the teacher then introduced the big question: “Are there universal moral wrongs/rights?” He divided the class into two large groups to discuss; one group was pro-

ethical relativism and the other group was anti-ethical relativism. Students battled out their ideas of these concepts. Some students had more exposure to other cultures and their views were more global. These students argued that behaviors can be right or wrong depending upon cultures. The teacher affirmed this idea by sharing examples of other cultural practices, where women can decide whether or not they let their children live or die at birth. In some cultures, they practice female genital mutilation, and in other cultures, females are not allowed to show any part of their body, except their eyes. Christian asked: “Is that morally wrong? How does our judgment affect our practices? Your moral compass is the moral compass?” After the students had a chance to digest these questions, Christian invited them to look at “The Preamble of Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and asked the students to rate each article as a) absolutely essential human rights, b) questionably essential human rights and c) unnecessary human rights. Students were then asked to consider: Is the UDHR a viable document against ethical relativism? This document was adopted in 1948 by delegates at the United Nations. How the adoption of this “declaration” does affect its viability?

Students worked with partners to categorize the articles. They pondered upon Article 1. “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in spirit of brotherhood.” The students engaged in a serious discussion that helped them make critical connections with their home, school and community. Student, Jason, said, “The absolute essential human right is that we are all human beings and therefore we are equal, born free and we should have the same access in life.” Another student, Lydia, said,

“What about racism, it is part of everyday, think about police brutality and profiling.” Another student replied, “So, why people are racist? Are we repeating the mistakes our ancestors made by mistreating Black people?” The conversation and questioning progressed as the teacher helped the students think about these issues by determining if people’s behaviors were right or wrong according to our ethical codes. Students connected their personal experiences with the class discussion and began to share their views.

For instance, student Anna argued, “I believe that how we have been raised and how our school experiences have been would determine how we deal with ethical things.” The teacher continued, “Tell us more about that.” A student responded, “Well if your parents are racist, you will pick up on that and think like they do. If you cheat on a test and you don’t get caught, you would do it again.” Students began to discuss the consequences of not being ethical, and how reason should play a role when deciding what to do in a difficult situation. Finally, they concluded that reason and conscience should help all people become more ethical and contribute to the development of a society that is fair, less judgmental and more just.

These classroom observations allowed me to see how the student’s wealth of knowledge helped shape the quality of the lessons, by connecting personal experiences to the lessons, giving the students the necessary tools to acquire new knowledge about difficult topics and by respecting and valuing one another as knowledgeable people in their own rights. During my interview with the students, it became clear to me that they understood the responsibility they had to themselves, their schools and their

communities. They knew that the positive changes they had experienced would only be long lasting if they applied their new knowledge to their lives. When I asked: “What do you think your teacher most wants you to know/be able to do?” The responses among all three groups of students interviewed were overwhelmingly similar. They said that they must respect other’s opinions, be independent thinkers, know why they think the way they do, apply reasoning because thoughts are always changing, realize one’s privilege, value one’s heritage, bring attention to what matters, find solutions to the problems, appreciate diverse ideas, be better informed, know the difference between schooling and education, understand multiple realities, look at all sides of an issue, be calm when arguing, engage in healthy dialogue, question what is essential, become involved in one’s school and community, and be the change one wants to see.

All students experienced transformation. The traditionally marginalized became much more involved in class discussions; they felt included, respected, and valued. Consequently, they began to see themselves differently, they began to speak more and share about how much they appreciate and honor their heritage, language and community with their teachers and peers. The privileged group of students began to acknowledge their privileges, to be more informed, to understand oppression, how to influence people to judge others more fairly, and how to be more inclusive. Both groups were ready to become agents of change when going back to their home school and community. Student, Emma celebrated this fact:

I would like to talk to my principal about starting a club at my school. I will try to get a teacher to sponsor it and I am going to try to work with that teacher sponsor

and do Area II and Area III activities to create a program like this one, to promote social justice in education.

Every teacher in the study agreed that incorporating students' funds of knowledge contributed to the success of their teaching practice. Students from diverse backgrounds furthered the teaching and learning experience for one another in many different ways. Most significant was what happened after the students left Southern School of Art and returned to their home communities and schools. The participant teachers hoped that these students would become social justice advocates in their own contexts. Their common goal was to help students not only recognize the social structures present in their everyday lives, but also to understand the need to advocate for those people who are silenced, whose voices are not being heard. All participant teachers understand that education can be controversial because some people view education as apolitical and indifferent to social injustice. According to Christian,

I know that it can be controversial in the sense that some view teaching as an apolitical institution, but I think that an effective critical pedagogue is able to not only inform students of social justice issues, but also model advocacy so they can take action. Not necessarily for the same beliefs that I hold, which I will say more settle in the classroom, but prepare them to be more active and engaged citizens. If that make sense! It is such a great thing to be able to break down the barriers of privileges, expose students to barrier of privilege, institutional barriers, nationality, and things like that, that we define ourselves.

Teachers in the study were able to create safe spaces for students to share their experiences and explore new paths to finding answers to their questions. They modeled the key elements of a democratic classroom for students to emulate, helping them become critical thinkers and future social justice advocates.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how the participant teachers in the study tapped into students' funds of knowledge not just to discover their "hidden treasures" or rich assets but also to understand where the students came from. Teachers used "resource-based pedagogy" (Moll, 2015) to engage with the students' sociocultural backgrounds and acted as learners as well as teachers in this process. I argue that when teachers understand their students' backgrounds and challenges, they are much better prepared to address their individual needs. By planning various activities in collaboration with other teachers, they promoted inclusion, facilitating and compensating for the lack of diversity in the school; they shared material that culminated in collaborative class projects bringing cultural awareness to the school. By asking thought-provoking questions, they engaged all students in class discussions that contributed to bridging the gaps that students had about understanding various socioeconomic and cultural conditions. When teachers and students were vulnerable and willing to share personal lived experiences, the classroom setting offered many new possibilities.

The findings also revealed that each student's funds of knowledge provided teachers with a fountain of resources that can help guide instructional practices and the curriculum, which connects to the work of Rodriguez (2013); he argued that incorporating funds of knowledge into classroom curriculum helped teachers create a more accepting and inclusive learning environment. Most revealing was the actual transformation that transpired as the privileged students began to recognize their privilege and change their views about the issues affecting the marginalized. At the same time, the

marginalized students began to feel inclusion and acceptance, and began to recognize their “hidden treasures” as a positive contribution to the learning experience. Ultimately, teachers met their teaching and learning goals by utilizing their students’ wealth of knowledge in developing meaningful lessons that impacted both students and teachers.

CHAPTER VI

PROMOTING CRITICAL DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM POSING

Critical dialogue is the foundation of the complex domain of critical pedagogy. It involves an open exchange of opinions and ideas to interrogate extant systems that necessitates the conscientious sharing of power, reflection and action between teacher and students. Critical dialogue exists in the presence of profound love for the world and for the people; it requires humility, faith and hope (Freire, 2000). Problem posing, one of the central tenets of critical dialogue, is a tool for developing and strengthening critical thinking skills. It is an inductive questioning process that structures dialogue in the classroom. Problem-posing dialogue is rooted in the works of Dewey and Piaget who were strong advocates for active, inquiring, hands-on education that resulted in student-centered curricula (Shor, 1992). Freire (2000) expanded on the idea of active, participatory education through problem-posing dialogue, a method that empowers students. In Freire's view, "The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (p. 80).

All participants in my study believed that in order to have meaningful dialogue, teachers must create a welcoming environment in the classroom where students felt validated as contributing members of a learning community. Participant teachers also believed that trust was the main component for effectively engaging in critical dialogue.

They expressed that trust helped foster critical dialogue that melded theory and practice as a vehicle toward inclusive education, particularly in linguistically and diverse settings. Going into the study, I suspected the importance of trust in order to have meaningful dialogue, and I was curious to find out how teachers developed trust with their students. In this chapter, I explore the strategies teachers used to foster critical dialogue with their students. I also explore how teachers used problem posing as a vehicle to engage all learners in researching and finding answers to critical questions. I explain how teachers aspired to transform the classroom practice, creating opportunities for critical dialogue to emerge by providing students with theoretical lenses to equip them with language to express their thoughts freely.

Participant teachers in my study believed that meaningful dialogue was driven by trust; teachers and students must develop a personal rapport that opens paths for honest, open, and genuine interactions. To implement an education that is transformative, critical pedagogues in my study incorporated political discourse that questions the traditional teaching practices of schooling into their lessons because it represents the struggles for power relations and meaning. According to Leistyna et al. (1999), Giroux and McLaren argue that “Teachers who assume the role of transformative intellectuals treat students as critical agents, question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilize dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory” (p. 303). Hence, teachers who employ critical dialogue are enabling their students to speak up for their rights and the rights of those who have been silenced by the educational system.

Teacher participants also believed that when students accepted everything that was presented to them without questioning it, they become passive learners; consequently, they did not feel the desire to change the system in place; as a result, they would contribute to perpetuating the problems of inequity and injustice. The idea of critical dialogue, according to Freire (2000), is a process of learning and knowing that must always involve a political project with the objective of dismantling oppressive structures existing in education and society. As a result, students who are engaged in critical dialogue and problem posing are able to help shape the curriculum and their cultural experiences of diverse teaching and learning styles. In addition, teachers and students are able to analyze the way power operates to construct identities and oppress particular groups, the complexities of racism, gender bias, cultural bias, class bias, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and so on. In this chapter, I will explore the following themes: problem posing, how teachers facilitate posing questions, the role of first name basis and classroom arrangement, teacher as facilitator, how teachers aspire to transform education through critical thinking, strategies teachers implement to transform their classroom, how teachers create opportunities for critical dialogue to emerge, asking critical questions, providing theoretical lenses and fostering trust and transparency. This study shed new light on critical dialogue in action in the secondary classroom.

Problem Posing

All participant teachers in the study utilized problem posing, as their main teaching tool, an essential teaching strategy at the Southern School of Art. Participant teachers believed that by providing students with opportunities to pose their own

questions aimed at exploring a given topic, it fostered more diverse thinking, enhanced student's problem solving skills, broadened their ideas of the world and helped them become more engaged in their education. All participants started their classes posing questions. For instance, in Edison's class, he presented students with a series of questions about music that reflected the songs they heard during a performance the night before and the songs he introduced during class.

Edison: What performance moved you most and why? What does music represent for the performer? How does music affect our lives?

Peter: I really enjoyed the classical concert, some of my friends preformed. I thought that it was moving because I started thinking about me being here instead of the beach with my family. The ocean came to mind, peace...

Alice: I liked it a lot! But I prefer other types of music, pop or rap.

Edison: How does music affect the way we feel?

Janice: I think music is very important in my life! I can't imagine my life without music. I wonder . . . How much influence does culture have in music? How do we know exactly what the author was thinking?

Edison: I want you to listen to this song from 1963, as you listen to the song I want you to think about the time the song was written, what does it represent? Listen to the lyrics; what was the author feeling, thinking, what was the message? What does the song say?

The students' formulation of new questions encouraged a sense of ownership that students need to construct their own knowledge.

All participants used problem posing as a valid strategy to promote critical thinking in the classroom. Students were expected to take what they knew and add to it, expanding their ways of thinking and problem solving. Teachers developed trust and

exercised hope with their students in order to experience authentic dialogue. For instance, in discussing music, Bruno shared with his students:

I want to share with you a song that brings memories of my childhood. My mom used to sing to this song when she was cleaning the house and I would sing along, not really understanding the meaning. Sometimes mom would stop cleaning and grab me and made me dance with her . . . ha ha ha. I was a terrible dancer, but I liked dancing with mom. I think music had a great effect on her! She always played music when I was a kid.

Edison played “Get Up Stand Up” by The Wailers (with Bob Marley). He explained to the class that this was a classic reggae protest song from 1973; a song about human empowerment. Edison also explained how reggae could be considered a form of Jamaican folk music that often served as a tool to critique social injustice. The sentiments of this particular song were universal; he continued: “People don’t have to understand or agree with Marley’s political and religious ideals for his songs to inspire people to take a stand against oppression.”

Trust was established through dialogue, sharing personal experiences between teacher and students where love, faith and hope became essential components for academic growth. As Freire (2000) states, “Nor yet can dialogue exist without hope. Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with others” (p. 91). Dialogue must be carried out in an environment of trust to engage in critical thinking that leads students taking risks. By providing students with background information as a starting point, teachers give them a place where they can begin their thinking. Teachers serve as resource, so they help students and give them the necessary information to develop their

own thinking and ideas. Students are called upon to take that information and formulate an argument or an idea to share it with the class.

The participants in my study used Freire's (2000) "problem-posing method" regularly in class. For example, teachers would write something on the board, perhaps a question, a quote, a phrase, or word from an assigned reading, then, ask the students to think about it and to talk to a partner about their thoughts and ideas. Then they would gather as one group, and the entire class would engage in dialogue. As opinions began to form, questions arose. All students had a chance to share their thoughts and, in turn, developed and asked their own questions. Students began to answer each other's questions and share their ideas. By doing this, a deeper conversation began to develop.

Teachers Facilitate Posing Questions

Teachers created an environment conducive for meaningful dialogue to surface, not just by sharing personal experiences, but also by asking critical questions that called for ideological analysis and political discourse to surface. I observed that all participant teachers served as facilitators. Teachers allowed students to converse and let their ideas flow, only interrupting them to answer the questions students could not answer and to guide them in a constructive direction. All participant teachers in the study showed that they were there to help students find the answers, but they made sure students got there on their own. By allowing students to have meaningful dialogue, new ideas were brought to the table and they were able to explain their points of view, learning from one another. Teachers also learned from the students as they became partners in the teaching and learning process.

Participant teacher, Bruno, engaged his students in critical thinking and critical dialogue. For example, at the beginning of a class, he asked: “How does materialism affect people’s mind set?” He consistently invited his students to write down their ideas and to discuss them with each other. Students had a reading assignment the night before; it involved the economic crisis and the role of the government. Students asked questions related to the economic and the financial crisis of 2008. The teacher introduced the documentary “Inside Job,” directed by Charles Ferguson, which explains the causes and consequences of the financial crisis of 2008. The film told the story of crime without punishment, of outrage that has so far largely escaped legal sanction, the betrayal of public trust and collective values. Students were attentive to the documentary and wrote down some questions as the film played. I wondered how many of these students had been exposed to this material before. It was my first time learning about it through this documentary. Showing the film took the entire class period. The teacher conducted the analysis of the film the following class. The discussion and assignment were based on capitalism and whether it was unethical. Students were eager to ask questions. The teacher asked: “How do you feel about it?” Students shouted their thoughts, questioning the role of government, how banks have too much power, deregulations, how it is bad business for the uneducated, and how Wall Street culture is corrupted among other things. The arguments began to flow as the students were able to pose questions.

Peter: Why don’t they teach us about this stuff in our schools?

Alice: I think that a big part of the problem is lack of education. We don’t really understand economics, so we just accept it.

- Teacher: Tell me if you have talked about derivatives in your economic class?
- John: No, in my class we covered some stuff like in a week. We learned how to balance our check book. We don't discuss this type of stuff.
- Alice: I was not surprised how many of the highest-profile players declined to be interviewed for the documentary. How did they get away with it?
- Chris: Why did the top executives at Goldman Sachs or the other big banks decline to be interviewed as well? Most of the interviewees are, at least from the perspective of the filmmaker, friendly witnesses, adding fuel to the director's critique of the way business has been done in the United States. (Field notes)

I observed how students posed relevant questions about the facts presented by the documentary. They were very comfortable analyzing the problems with the U.S. financial market that ended up collapsing in 2008 and its repercussions. As problem posing progressed, students began to look for solutions and at the same time experienced frustration. The dialogue continued:

- Jan: Why don't we do something about it? People are suffering a loss of wealth or income as a direct result of the ability of this small group to impose its own agenda on us. Yet the group has emerged unhurt.
- Robert: Business leaders pay themselves whether their companies succeed or fail.
- Mary: How can a board of directors stand casually by as CEO's leave with millions, even though they are total failures? (Field notes)

The conversation unfolded as the teacher continued to serve as a facilitator and invited students to consider the core issues and possible solutions. Students raised their hands to participate and ideas flowed easily. The students raised issues such as lack of education, understanding the economy, society allowing competition, the need for more change, and

more public outrage. Bruno then connected the discussion to class assignments and readings; students were invited to write a comprehensive Bill. He divided the class into two large groups, according to ideology, one group for capitalism and the other group against it. After a lengthy discussion students were divided in small groups. The discussion and assignment were based on “I love capitalism but it is unethical.” Students were supposed to respond to this statement and write a Bill that would justify their beliefs. Then, Bruno took the class to the computer lab so they could start working on their Bill. Students selected their small groups and began writing. As I observed the class moving to the computer lab, I noticed how students did not need much instruction on what to write or how to create their document. Trust and freedom to generate ideas and resolve the stipulated problems were evident. Students remained totally engaged in their project for the entire class period.

Bruno had connected the readings to the film, and listened to the students’ ideas and insights about possible solutions. Students were satisfied with their conclusions and were enthusiastic about writing their own bill. It became clear to me that by the teacher listening to students’ ideas and by showing how their opinions matter, he gave them reassurance and guidance to proceed with writing their document containing solutions. Bruno also reminded students to consider the unethical side. What is allowed and how do things become common practice? Students generated bills that covered several ideas: receiving feedback from employers, selling assets in order to go into politics, learning how to monitor profits and investments, showing proof that people can pay back loans, among others.

Students were able to share their views as the lesson culminated with their projects. They shared their thoughts, ideas, fears and questions. In student Jason's view, "Do we have the guts to reverse the excessively generous tax cuts we gave the wealthy under economics of corruption that has prevailed over the past thirty or more years?" (Field notes). Problem posing became a powerful tool that students easily adopted as their own way of questioning the social and political system.

This example from Bruno's classroom is typical of the kind of problem-posing I observed in all participant teachers' classrooms. At Southern School of Art, lessons usually began with a critical question posed to the class that connected the topic at hand with previous knowledge. Problem posing is a technique proven to work well to engage students to discuss any topic, particularly if the topic relates to their lives. For instance, Bruno asked: "What is the impact of capitalism in your life?" This learning experience showed that by posing questions, students and teachers were able to engage in meaningful discussion on topics that they were not used to discussing in their regular schools. Students were able to explore ethics in the political and economic arenas and use their newly acquired thinking skills to generate possible solutions to life's real problems.

First Name Basis and Dialogue

Teachers facilitate dialogue by creating the physical conditions that invite students' participation. Going into the study, I expected to see a more traditional classroom set up, as one sees in a regular public school classroom. I expected to see rows of desks and a much more rigid educational environment. It was surprising to me to hear

the students call their teachers by their first names and to see the relaxed classroom environment. According to teacher, Edison,

At Southern School of Art there is a pretty universal standard where everyone goes by their first name. I do follow that convention in my university teaching too. So a student last year questioned that. I mean it led into a good discussion on why do we do that? The extents to which it shapes the place; I mean you see that it is significant that people go by their first name here. Some students view it as an overly friendly thing or boundaries...I think that it helps students more to approach teachers, like thinking of people less as authorities figures, I guess that . . . A few weeks ago I had a thought that I might switch to doctor but I'm not sure if that would work . . . what it does to the classroom dynamic. (Teacher interview #1)

All participants shared similar views about the way they interacted with the students and shared similar classroom setting preferences. All participant teachers were called by their first names, had friendly relationships, and sat with their students.

The data showed that by establishing a teacher-student relationship including addressing teachers on a first name bases and by creating a stress-free classroom, teachers and students were able to exercise problem posing and critical dialogue conducive to meaningful learning. There were no discipline problems or misconduct from the students and there was a high level of engagement from all parties involved.

Teacher as Facilitator

Serving as a facilitator, helped teachers manage their classroom participation and promote student engagement. Teachers didn't feel a loss of authority or their role as teachers' diminished by facilitating the conversation. On the contrary, by serving as facilitators, teachers helped students learn in a more relaxed atmosphere, sharing a more egalitarian environment. In Christian's view,

I don't really care for the idea of the star on stage teacher. I think that is like the cliché a lot of people see in education. I like to think of myself as a facilitator of student-centered learning, um, I do exercise some authority in the sense that I can select what text we read and what we study and what concepts are learned, by what is taught, but I prefer to think of myself as a facilitator of the students' autonomous learning, that is more effective, not only with achievement, but also with engagement.

All participant teachers used facilitation to conduct instruction. They would start class by greeting their students and asking how they were doing, showing genuine interest for their well-being. Usually, they would wait for the students to discuss whatever was on their mind before starting with their lesson. I noticed this strategy served as an effective way to motivate students to talk and share their thoughts, feelings or simply ask questions. Once the teacher greeted the students, the teachers became facilitators, engaging students in dialogue, guiding the conversation. As the lesson progressed, students would pair up or work in groups. Teachers would walk around, listen to the students, and answer any questions or concerns.

In Bruno's class (Social Sciences, Area I) class started when Bruno asked his students: "How do you feel? How are you doing?" Students answered in various ways; some students shared their feelings: good, happy, tired, and curious about the assigned reading. Bruno asked: "Do you have any arguments about the validity of what the author is saying?" The class was discussing "Population Control vs. Aid." Students quickly engaged as they began sharing their ideas about the previously assigned reading, "Famine Affluence, and Morality" written by a utilitarian philosopher, Peter Singer. The reading sparked some intense conversations about the arguments presented—the idea that people are dying in places like East Bengal from lack of food, shelter, and medical care. Students

learned that constant poverty, adverse weather conditions such as cyclones and civil war turned millions of people into destitute refugees. One student argued that the author contradicts himself. Another student argued that aid without population control causes more famine. Students had different ideas about the author's argument on the reasons for giving aid to people. I noticed how respectful students were of one another. They listened, paying attention to the individual who was speaking, and they were mindful of taking turns, so everyone could participate. One student asked: "So what would happen if we separate the people from the government?" The teacher argued: "So we shouldn't hold the people responsible for what the government does? What do you think should be done about charity?" Then the teacher asked the students to discuss in groups. Students turned to the people around them and made groups of threes and fours, while the teacher walked around monitoring and serving as a facilitator.

I noticed how all students were engaged in discussion; it seemed that everyone had read the assigned material and that they were eager to share their opinions. Bruno asked another question for the students to ponder: "Does altruism matter in this action of giving?" The conversation among the students progressed as some of them were referring to quotes from the reading to support their points of view. The discussion then transitioned into the big round table. Bruno went back to the main circle and asked the students to join in a class discussion. One student said, "I think that giving to charity should be encouraged but not obligated." Another student replied: "If you make it obligatory then it becomes a task." The conversation progressed as the students began to conclude that society as a whole needs to realize that there is a moral obligation for the

population to help others in need. Students questioned the percentage of tax money that will actually go to charity. Bruno explained how the money was split and distributed. Students raised their hands and invited the ones who had not said anything to participate. For example, student, Marie, said “I think that Grace had her hand up before me . . .”

By creating a comfortable, democratic and inclusive environment, students were respectful of one another as evidenced by not interrupting one another and taking turns; even when they all wanted to speak, they waited their turn. This relates to the democratic setting established by the teacher and the students from the beginning of the summer program. The conversation progressed with arguments about the value of charities, the need for wealthy countries to help the poor ones, the purpose of welfare, religion, missions, types of charities, and the final destination of donated funds. Bruno posed more questions: “How do you practice charity? Is there enough money to fund all of them?” A student, Alison, shared: “In my experience, a poor town, like where I come from, needs charity because the people there just don’t have the resources; I think that wealth in this country is poorly distributed.”

In this exchange, students connected their personal experiences with the reading and the classroom dialogue. The opportunities for discussing the ideas of the author provided all students the space to ask questions and receive various answers. The teacher let the students figure out the answers, as he guided the conversation, and provided feedback when necessary as they interacted with one another (small group discussion and large group discussion). Bruno walked around listening to students’ points of view and getting feedback to steer the dialogue. After a lively discussion, serving as a preamble for

the big question, the teacher asked, “Is capitalism inherently unethical?” Bruno encouraged the students to discuss it in their groups. He explained that this question would carry out to the next lesson. I noticed that all students were excited and comfortable and eager to discuss the topic:

Charlie: Competition inherently will make you want to beat another person.

John: I don't know where society will be without capitalism. It is the American way!

Teacher: OK! Let's talk for the last fifteen minutes because then we will be discussing economics.

Joe: On paper capitalism, the idea of capitalism looks good but when applied to humans, not so much.

Britney: Competition, when is being unrestricted detrimental...

Liz: It is unethical because it creates a false sense of superiority.

Anthony: You have to create an idea that if you work hard enough, you will succeed.

Gorge: It is unethical and pretty natural at the same time.

John: But it is assuming that everyone starts at the same point in the race of life. We know that not everyone starts at same point; it is not homogenous in terms of opportunity.

Marie: Some people do not start at the same spot. They cannot fairly compete with privileged people.

Lee: Even if we have the same beginning, I think it is unethical.

Jordan: From my experience, the people who do not have the means, they believe that the system has no hope.

Students continued their dialogue as the teacher wrote on the board: “Basic needs of capitalism.” What are some alternatives and are they ethical? Everyone paid attention as each student elaborated their ideas on capitalism. There were no interruptions. Students helped keep track of whose turn it was to speak. Bruno clarified some of the points and continued to steer the dialogue, validating students’ ideas. He ensured that all students participated without making them feel uncomfortable. For example, Bruno would make statements such as, “Anne what was the idea you were sharing with your group?” He then introduced the idea of capitalism and connected it to ethics. Students were making connections to their own experiences and to the assigned reading. Bruno facilitated the dialogue. As evidenced by the details of the class above, he only interjected when necessary, and he encouraged all students to participate.

In Bruno’s first interview, he expressed the importance of creating a class where students could feel free and prepared to discuss various topics. He valued what the students brought to the class and was open to listen to all ideas when facilitating conversation. In Bruno’s first interview, he stated, “Students bring different perspectives first of all! Which is probably the most important, different perspectives, and they bring energy. They can provide different ideas on things I had not even thought about before, which is good.” He considered himself an easygoing kind of teacher who enjoyed a good discussion and when things got intense or too serious, he enjoyed using humor to make the discussion more fun and to help students feel more comfortable. I witnessed how students related well to him and his teaching style; facilitating conversation is something that came to Bruno with little effort. Bruno stated, “I see myself more like a facilitator

and so my role is to facilitate conversation. In a lot of ways, I know more than the students but at the same time the students know things I don't know, so my job is to guide the discussion.”

When guiding the conversation, Bruno listened attentively to each student's opinion and ideas, demonstrating with eye contact, a nod of the head or a word of assurance that what the student said mattered. He emphasized that his students were young adults whose opinions were just as valuable as his; the only difference in Bruno's view was that he just happened to have had more experiences than them.

Bruno's teaching style, the way he facilitated dialogue and reassured his students was indicative of how all participants conducted their classes. Facilitating dialogue came easily to all of them; consequently, they were able to involve all students as they applied their democratic classroom rules.

Aspire to Transform Education through Critical Thinking

Participant teachers agreed that the ability to think critically was one of the most important skills students needed to develop and that teachers needed to foster within the students in order to transform classroom practice. Teachers at Southern School of Art conceptualized the ideal critical thinker as someone who was open-minded, flexible, honest, fair-minded in evaluation, aware of personal biases, careful in making judgments, and willing to reconsider. In the field of teacher education, the interest in teaching and developing critical thinking skills has increased dramatically in recent years. Discussion around strategies for helping students develop critical thinking abilities, are increasing in the literature (Laman, Jewett, Jennings, Wilson, & Souto-Manning, 2012; Mercer,

Hennessy, & Warwick, 2010; Robertson & Rane-Szostak, 1996). Classroom dialogue has emerged as a central strategy for both teaching and applying critical thinking skills.

Listening becomes an essential part of dialogue, since by listening to others we are able to discuss ideas and debate issues as we develop critical thinking skills. According to Mercer et al. (2010), effective dialogue interaction involves multiple skills, including the ability to converse with others, the skill of qualifying one's view, and the ability to elaborate and persuade others. These skills prove to be vital to the SSA students' learning experiences and the development of critical thinking skills. In addition, it was evident that dialogue encouraged active student class participation.

Every participant felt that dialogue was best driven by a teacher who facilitated it through establishing class rules with the students and creating safe spaces for free expression. Participants also discussed their personal experiences before coming to Southern School of Art and how these experiences helped shaped their practice. Overall, the participants not only emphasized dialogue as a major teaching tool, but also dialogue is an effective method in which any educator can reach all students. All participant teachers believed that students must communicate their ideas and beliefs orally. As Christian put it,

If a student is going to go through seventy-five minutes of class and doesn't say anything, I feel like at some level I fail as the instructor . . . I think that students can express their knowledge in ways that goes beyond journal writing or jotting down some notes. I mean actually expressing their ideas I think that is a key component.

When students are able to express their ideas effectively, providing rich arguments for their ideas and beliefs, teachers acquire the feedback necessary to pursue classroom goals and objectives set to transform the classroom experience. Intentionally creating a space for sharing opinions and critical thinking also opens the door to student resistance about the content of various topics. Sometimes, teachers experienced resistance in the classroom, particularly when discussing controversial topics, such as police brutality, welfare benefits, healthcare, etc. Critical thinking is fostered when students are taught how to think, not what to think; to question whatever they read, hear or see, and never to accept any claim blindly; to postpone judgment until they have heard all sides of a question, and interrogate all claims. Critical thinking is life's vital skill, a skill educators must help develop in order for students to question their reality and develop original solutions to the problems affecting their world.

Strategies that Work in the Classroom

Teaching a variety of students can be challenging for any teacher, particularly when teachers have prepared a lesson and the class is not receptive to the objectives being discussed. In discussing how teachers manage students' resistance to curriculum and class goals, participant teachers shared some of the examples that have helped them develop strategies that impact class dynamic and critical dialogue. Catherine said that she tried to first make an educated guess to understand where the resistance was coming from. She thought about the experiences students brought with them and students' expectations. Because the class was required, they were mandated to take it. Catherine assumed that this requirement could attribute to student resistance because they had not

taken this type of philosophy class before. In some cases, students may have been resistant because they thought that the class was going to be a philosophy class that did not address social justice issues and then realized that they were discussing institutionalized racism.

Catherine was mindful about presenting dialogue that would engage students without shutting them down or calling them out because she felt that would change the dynamic of the classroom. Catherine explained,

I try to create a classroom dynamic that doesn't lend too much anxiety. I want them to be challenged but I do not want to use my power to call on someone when they are not expecting it or directly say that someone's ideas are wrong.

Posing questions is connected to classroom dynamic that invites all parties involved to participate in a non-threatening way. Catherine exercised democratic principles in order to meet her class objectives without imposing her beliefs on her students. She shared some examples of students' resistance that could have jeopardized productive dialogue.

Catherine stated,

For example, I had someone in class last year that was, when we were talking about police brutality, she was like definitely coming from this place: "No, law enforcement is right, black people just need to stop braking the law" and she said those things, and when she said those things I, because this was an ongoing dynamic, the one thing I would ask: "What do other people think about this?" So, to facilitate conversation. Other times I would refer to an author, artist that we have been studying. So I will say, "I hear you but in the semester we study," and I would try to paraphrase it.

Sometimes as a last resort with that particular student, Catherine would scratch the plans of the day and refer back to the five common elements of oppression. She would do that

together with her students because she believed the whole class benefited from it. Monitoring and adjusting lesson plans was necessary to benefit all students. Catherine changed her lessons by meeting the students where they were at while also considering if the resistance was directed at the content area itself or at the discomfort it raised for the students in thinking about social justice.

In order to transform the classroom through critical dialogue, teachers at SSA encouraged political awareness and a sense of agency. Teachers at SSA drew attention to notions of critical dialogue and active citizenship by focusing on the educational potential of political and economic discussions that led to a deeper understanding of the way that the American system works. Teachers operated from a belief that adolescent students can become agents for change. Teachers also believed that critical dialogue evolved from the topics covered in the assigned readings, documentaries and guest speakers, into encouraging adolescent students to overcome peer pressure and peer culture that marginalize social activism.

Teachers were sensitive to students' biases regarding various topics. They helped students develop that sensitivity so they could exercise respect and understanding with one another, when engaging in dialogue in small groups or as a whole class. For Bruno, teaching politics and economics presented various challenges. In our conversation, Bruno explained his concern with giving students the tools to develop their own ideas about how the government functions. He wanted students to learn about corruption within the system. He wanted students to critically think about the causes and the impact of the economic depression of 2008. Bruno noted,

I mean because that is my main hope that they walk away with a more critical sense of how American policies affect everything and I would say it is a challenge because I don't want the students to tune out because they are opposed in some sense. Like if their political views don't match what we are talking about, I don't want them to tune out, I want them to see that this just comes down to, this is an American policy that goes across political parties, um . . . this is my challenge.

Students in Bruno's class were challenged to think critically and connect class topics to their own lives. They were exposed to various teaching materials and presentations that helped them think, discuss and develop new ideas and views. Bruno wanted to create opportunities for his students to think about and analyze how their lives related to a culture of excess, and how they were part of the problem or the solution(s). Sometimes during class discussions, it was clear to Bruno that his students felt guilty admitting that they may be complicit to many of the world's problems, and it was difficult because for the first time they were presented with this type of information. Bruno stated:

Yes, the challenge for them is that they have a hard time seeing that we live in a culture of excess, makes them feel guilty, they don't want to admit that they may be complicit to a lot of the world's problems and this is a difficult issue. I mean it is hard for me because when I think of this in particular, I see that I am still complicit to a lot of the world's issues, and we are living in a system that complies to our mind set.

Bruno also felt uncomfortable being part of the system, so he understood the students well. Sometimes the discussion topics were difficult because they related too closely to the students' lives. Bruno explained that sometimes dialogue evolved into deep discussions in which students wanted to take a stand without really listening to the entire argument. Because the students followed the established classroom rules, they read the readings, watched the documentaries, and participated in the seminars, and learned how

to listen to one another's arguments as they gathered all the information before making their own conclusions. Teachers gave them time to process the information before engaging in class discussion. Sometimes teachers asked students to "free write" which gave them a chance to reflect and write about any given topic.

The teachers selected topics that were relevant to the students and the community at large. They were mindful of the students' backgrounds, discussing issues that would stimulate inquiry. Bruno, for example, realized that some social topics sparked a particular thought in some students, while not on others. As Bruno put it:

Well it depends if you are talking about banking, the students from the Charlotte area are going to care more, if you are talking about welfare then the students from the poor areas will have more to say, so it does matter, but I do also think that at this age the students are going to be more intrinsically involved, because, if it is a social problem.

Students reacted differently to controversial issues, particularly to issues that reveal the imperfections our government and economic system. I asked Bruno about the reaction students had in class as they discussed the essential question: Is capitalism intrinsically unethical? Students were unsure how to approach or deal with this question, but they managed to have a healthy dialogue, all students expressed their ideas and listened to one another carefully to understand one another's points of view. Bruno stated that he was surprised with the ideas they generated in class. Students raised some interesting points that he, as the teacher, had not thought about. During the interview, Bruno stated,

I mean is our system intrinsically bad? I thought they did a very good job with their responses. They had reasons to explain why. They said that the system is not bad in theory, but it is just human nature that it is bad. They are questioning the

nature of our system. I was happy with their responses. I am always a little bit surprised about the things they say, but I am not totally surprised.

Bruno gave credit to his students for questioning the government and the American economic systems; in the beginning of the summer, they thought the United States was the best country in the world. The fact that students were interrogating the system illustrated their transformation as more advanced critical thinkers.

In the classrooms I observed, critical questions inspired conversations in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. All participants agreed that providing students with opportunities to discuss the issues in small groups first facilitated dialogue. Students seemed to talk more in small group settings. It gave the quieter students a chance to talk more openly. It also provided all students a chance to experiment with their thoughts and ideas and sort of practice before presenting their ideas to the large class group. The technique of small group dialogue was a common practice in all classes I observed.

According to all the teachers, dialogue flowed better when students felt comfortable and the topic stimulated them. Sofia spoke specifically about the benefit of small group discussions:

So in general I think groups are very good, students tend to participate more; plus if you just sit in the class in a large group for an hour and fifteen minutes you get tired really fast. But it gives their brain transition for a minute; they don't get burnt out that quickly.

Collaboration increased critical dialogue by facilitating relationship development among students and by creating the space for them to share their social identities as they examined issues of power, privilege, and oppression.

Creating Opportunities for Critical Dialogue to Emerge

All participant teachers agreed that class discussion more easily emerged when democratic rules were established early on, where students respected one another's ideas and perspectives and teachers fostered a civil and caring class culture. In all subject matter, teachers had the ability to create questions that stimulate critical thinking skills and promote meaningful dialogue. Teachers and students formulated questions that helped steer the lesson forward. In every class I observed, the classroom atmosphere included transparency and trust among students and between teacher and students. According to Catherine, students were engaged from the first day thinking about education and the surrounding political context. Students were encouraged to participate in dialogue around social justice issues. Teachers were constantly enacting critical pedagogy when they were in conversations with others. Dialogue became the vehicle for transporting knowledge from the classroom to the students' daily lives. SSA students were not motivated by grades, since there were no formal or informal assessments. Instead, students were energetically participating in class, motivated by the new possibilities presented through dialogue. In our interview, Catherine maintained:

I think that in the place of a grade, there is a sense of responsibility, like Southern School is a special place where they get to be surrounded by other smart and motivated people. I think it is important to mention that, but the other thing, that general sense of energy, like students are not motivated by grades, they are motivated by dialogue, they know it is important to ask these questions and to consider this knowledge.

The majority of students responded positively to active dialogue, exchanging ideas and learning about various topics. Many students enjoyed the opportunity to interact with

their peers and share ideas with the entire class. Such interactions motivated them to think critically. However, while verbal participation was popular among students, Catherine thought that writing assignments were more appropriate for some of the more introverted students because they could have time to think about the topic and put their ideas in order.

In Sofia's class, critical dialogue emerged as a byproduct of exposure to concepts and vocabulary that students could manage in small and large group discussions. For example, in one classroom observation, the class started with Sofia reminding students about the notion of social construction and invited them to see how it connected to the lesson plan for the day. She asked the students to count to four and divided them into groups. Then she posed the following questions: "What questions matter most in your life? Which experience matters most that is real in your life? For example, is free will really real? Are our concepts and ideas real?"

Sofia instructed the students to take a few minutes to think about the questions and then they began to express their ideas in small groups. One student talked about pride and self-confidence, and posed the following questions: What is the whole purpose of education? Why do we place so much importance in this institution? Another student questioned destiny and choices. Another student talked about how moral ethics shapes our lives, while others talked about how the media controls what we believe as they report on whatever they want us to see. I noticed how the analysis flowed freely when students were not interrupted or corrected. Students were able to brainstorm various questions and ideas. After a while, Sofia redirected the class discussion and asked them to

share what kind of questions they were able to generate. Students began to share their thoughts:

Alex: Is my perception of reality real?

Lydia: Is my conscious real?

Jeff: Is family relation real?

Joe: Does love and compassion really matter?

Kathy: Is the perception of us and others real?

Teacher: Now we are going to discuss an example with our groups. The story is true, about a North Carolina elementary school teacher who was forced to resign after his decision to read a gay-themed children's book to his third-grade class led to controversy in the small town. The teacher read to his students "King and King," a fairy tale about a prince who finds his prince charming, after he perceived negative gay stereotyping in his class. He explained that he was inspired to teach the book after a boy in his class was being called a girl and the word gay was used in a derogatory way. Although his decision to teach the story was upheld by a review committee, the school's principal later ordered teachers to inform parents in advance about books they read to their students. The teacher resigned from the Elementary School because he felt administrators did not support him. The school's assistant principal, who lent the teacher the copy of the book he read to his class, also submitted a letter of resignation. So the parents thought that reading the book to the children was a form of indoctrination. With your group figure out what evidence do we need in order to make a decision?

Sofia incorporated a real-life example of actions connected to ethics, social construction and the consequences people pay when facing social pressures. Students discussed the many issues affecting the teacher, the students, the child who was bullied, and the educational outcome. The class dynamic was open, dialogue flowed from all parties, the

energy in the room was positive as the students took turns to express their ideas, questions and beliefs:

Heather: Do third graders know the difference? Why would they make fun of their classmate?

John: I think that affected everybody. Being gay is not a choice, so these kids were learning about tolerance.

Anne: Is it the schools' decision what to teach? Is it the parents and community?

Elias: I don't think the teacher had an agenda. I don't think that the teacher was teaching about homosexuality.

Teacher: So what are some questions that we need to ask about reality?

Jane: At what age can students decide for themselves?

Rod: What is the difference in teaching, exposing and indoctrinating?

Jeff: At what point does voicing your opinion deny the rights of other people?

Victoria: What students matter more than others? So there was a student in the third grade class who was called gay by his peers. The teacher thought that by reading the book, it would address the conflict.

Taylor: What does the word gay actually mean? Where do you draw the line when your reality affects your education?

Joe: Man, woman, is it the only way just because it is universally accepted by society? The parents don't realize that this is about educating kids, it is about tolerance. I think that we are a product of traditional fairy tales. This book is showing something people need to explore more.

Teacher: Things are historically and politically situated so it connects to tradition.

During class, the conversation became more intense as one student shared the story of her gay uncle. She discussed her view on how the rejection of homosexuality by the community is due to lack of knowledge. She elaborated about the struggles of her uncle and her family, the pain everybody in the family experienced, and how she had benefited by having the opportunity to talk about the subject in this summer program. The student clearly incorporated new vocabulary to help her express her ideas and beliefs, and she seemed very comfortable sharing her story with the class:

Jane: My uncle was rejected by his peers, my family, and church when he came out of the closet. I watched him suffer due to our socially constructed beliefs that are ingrained in us since we come to the world. I do not want to be part of the problem; I want to be part of the solution. We need to discuss these topics early on in schools. It is socially unjust to reject people for their sexual or gender preferences! Who are we to judge?

Teacher: What are the implications of children getting bullied because of the way they are?

At that moment, one female student got up; she was upset and she was crying. She left the room. Sofia continued teaching, “How much power do teachers have in the classroom?” All students openly discussed the topic. Everyone participated and had a chance to express their thoughts. At the end of the class, the teacher approached the student who had left the room earlier and was returning to class to get her books. The teacher asked her if she was ok. The student replied,

Mary: The consequences of bullying can be deadly. My cousin committed suicide because he was gay and he was bullied at school. He was also rejected by our family and community. It was a tragedy! Sorry I got upset, this touches home . . .

Sofia had facilitated a delicate topic and managed to engage her students in a much-needed discussion. I noticed how all participants managed difficult situations in similar manner. The body of literature and the participants in my study show how effective dialogue in a low-stress environment stimulates engagement and helps students to feel safe enough to express their feelings. It is crucial that educators understand the implications of creating spaces for critical dialogue to emerge. According to the participants, teachers need to be prepared to handle the emotional and unexpected reactions from part of the students. Critical dialogue emerged partially because students were equipped with the language that supports effective communication among all parties in a safe environment. I discuss this in the next section.

Ask Critical Questions/Provide Theoretical Lenses

In this section, I discuss how teachers used similar strategies in order to enrich vocabulary instruction. All participants used the following methods: (a) integration—connecting new vocabulary to prior knowledge, (b) repetition—using the word or concept many times, and (c) meaningful use—multiple opportunities to use new words in class discussions, reading and writing.

Edison began class instructing the students to discuss the previous night's speaker's use of rhetoric. He asked them to first write their impression of the talk in one word. Edison had written the following words on the board: logos = the way we present things, ethos = authority, pathos = emotions. Students had a chance to think about the terms in connection to the speaker. The speaker was an African American feminist and the impression students had was distinctly different from student to student. Edison asked

the students to number themselves and then divided them into groups. Students automatically began discussing the speaker. The conversations progressed as the students compared and contrasted the intentions of the speaker and what they actually felt. The teacher reminded them to focus on the emotions the speaker intended for them to feel and to compare it to the emotions they actually felt. Students shouted: “Love, she is positive, misconstrue, poorly phrased, confusing, conflicted, interesting, she did not inspire me ...”

Edison continued to steer the discussion, asking students to share:

Teacher: Which reactions are distanced from your own reaction?

Alexia: She did not explain anything, she talked about love. I did not see the relationship with Black Feminism.

Jordan: Even if the presentation wasn't what people expected, it is relevant to our society.

Helen: She showed us Black women in history I had never heard about those people before, for example Ida B. Wells, Ella Baker, Audre Lorde, Lucille Clifton, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Lorraine Hansberry.

Teacher: What role do these people play in the presentation?

Jordan: She called them her ancestors...

Steven: Yea! She was connecting them to the present. Obviously I felt ignorant because all those names are from people that played an important role in our history.

Ricky: I don't think it was boring. She was using various elements to make us think. At the same time, we are developing new awareness about Black feminism, something we had never discussed before.

Teacher: Well, let's talk about what was she trying to say?

Anthony: She touched on the definition, but never elaborated on it.

Carla: Well, I think that we were supposed to figure it out. It can be about love.

Jay: She just had too many things be love.

Edison let the students figure out the answers as they began to connect the speaker's performance and message to the terms learned in class. The open dialogue presented many different avenues for the students to take. Words took on an important role when defining actions and the message somehow became clear. Students had a chance to digest the speakers' message, analyzing the words and defining their meanings. There was a progression of inquiry as the students and teacher began to understand the powerful message behind this controversial speech.

Teacher: Let's think about other words, love can be complicated, other terms?

Jason: One way she used logos (the way we present things) is that we had all of her credentials; like she is educated, a doctor, we had more credibility.

Teacher: She has all these academic credentials but she was comfortable sitting on the floor. She described herself as queer, fat, feminist, mother, etc.

Jill: I really don't know how to answer that!

Jason: I think she used all those adjectives to give her authority to speak. She helped us get acquainted with the terms that she, as a Black feminist feels comfortable with.

Alice: Queer, in Area III we have discussed that term.

It became evident that the students learned new terms and were eager to discuss them in class. One student gave a lengthy explanation that covered the depth of the term queer.

Edison contributed to her explanation by providing historical background of the term and

by explaining that by adopting this term, the LGBTQ community gained a sense of power. Edison answered more questions. The students wanted to know if the word gay was derogatory. Edison had the word “gay” ready on the screen and began to explain the original meaning—joy, happy, carefree—and then he explained how it evolved through 500 years into the terms we use today for labeling gay men, lesbians, bisexual men and bisexual women. Students shared their ideas openly about the terms; they questioned many other related terms. Then the teacher went back to discussing the speaker again. He asked,

Teacher: Be love, be love, be love . . . That is how the speaker started the presentation. What did she probably mean to do? Where do we see pathos (emotions)?

Anne: She brought those Black figures, attempting to make it personal.

Teacher: What emotions were intended as we stood up so many times?

Ali: Frustration, tired from standing, confusion, we had to think about White supremacy.

Alex: The idea of Black feminism as a gateway to changing society.

Teacher: Sort of let’s think about what makes the points of this presentation?

Rod: Black Feminism, it is a path to a better future.

Lea: I felt as we have to unlearn our Whiteness, White supremacy to really get what she was trying to tell us thorough the quotes she used.

Diane: A lot of people think that Black feminism is very exclusive, but it is named that way to give more power to Black people.

Brent: A lot of people have a hard time believing that it is about love. We had a hard time understanding but this is her idea and it may very well be love.

Anne: Her point was that Black feminism is tied up to class oppression, sexism, gender identity and racism. These things are bound together. I like this quote she used by Audre Lorde: “It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”

Students made connections to the message from the speaker; they started the discussion confused about what the speaker was trying to say, not recognizing the names of some key people in American history and discussing a topic totally new for most of them. As their dialogue progressed, they explored the possibilities and began to understand the importance of the speaker’s message. According to the teachers, the students experienced various emotions during the presentation; the message was powerful and open for interpretation; the exposure to the newly acquired terminology facilitated students’ comprehension and ability to express their thoughts and ideas.

Fostering Trust and Transparency

All participant teachers agreed that it was easy to be invested in an environment where students felt supported by their teachers and peers. Fostering trust and transparency was a priority among all participants because it allowed for spaces that facilitated dialogue to emerge and the conditions for friendship to develop. Teachers set the stage when they introduced themselves to their classes and worked collaboratively with their student to establish class norms. Teachers openly shared their plans with the students and invited them to take part in building the classroom experience.

Catherine gave students ample opportunities to contribute to the class culture and established procedures for meeting learning goals. She introduced herself to the students and shared personal information as an invitation for them to feel comfortable enough to

share their own information. Allowing class time for teachers and students to get to know one another was crucial when building trust and transparency. Catherine emphasized,

I guess when I am planning much of it is built when we are setting the classroom space together. Um, like I always plan a couple of days when we are learning each other's names, who we are, and we are figuring how we are going to use the space.

Catherine used democratic principles to establish a classroom atmosphere conducive for critical thinking and critical dialogue to emerge. The students chose the classroom arrangement and the amount of information they wanted to share. Catherine said:

I asked them how do you want to use this space? These are some of the activities we are going to be doing, and we are going to be doing group work and we are going to be talking together. I ask, what do you think makes sense? And then they all agreed to do the circle that is what we are using right now.

Catherine shared her feelings about always thinking and reflecting on her role as a teacher. She wanted students to trust her, trust one another and trust the class they were helping build. Even if she was the one designing the lessons, the way the lessons were delivered had to reflect the students' input. She saw herself as the facilitator and encouraged her students to contribute their ideas so that the class became theirs while at the same time building community. Catherine emphasized:

I guess that I am always planning with the intention of having them discuss things together, but also reflect on their own, but then also make things, so I try to sort of like, there are two layers, what we are going to be talking and thinking about and how we are going to be doing it together. Trusting one another is the base for how the activity looks like, I always try to think about that and how am I going to be matching them up to do. Like with this inquiry project, I wanted them to do

something together and talking, ways of thinking with each other and that is important, like the community element.

Teacher participants relied on critical dialogue to make students think critically about the issues affecting our schools and communities. Teachers were mindful of the issues students brought to the classroom. As they built trust and transparency, students became more sensitive and open to discussing difficult topics especially those that were new to them. Some of the issues affecting these students are common to a predominantly White school. Catherine thought:

How I can get them to think critically about their privileges, getting them to think critically about education, also gearing up to the time when they are getting ready to go back to schools, the schools that they came from. Like I think that there is a big challenge to get them to think, “Ok how can you use your experience here to build ties with students that are different from you at school?” I really try to make them think about who they are set up to have relationships with at their schools and who they are set up to value and how can they reflect and break out of that a little bit.

Participant teachers believed that by allowing agency in the classroom, by challenging students to think critically, by having open discussions with no taboo topics, and by giving multiple opportunities to explore their ideas, students were able to develop awareness about issues they had never been exposed to prior to the summer classroom experience at the SSA. The trust developed during the summer program influenced students’ learning experiences, motivating them to become agents of change when they went back to their schools and communities.

Flexibility when implementing lessons was necessary as sometimes teachers encountered resistance from the students or they asked relevant questions to topics that

had messy answers. The SSA was a place that offered a variety of learning opportunities that were interconnected with one another. There was an emphasis on social justice, and bringing awareness to social issues was a priority for all teachers. There were times when the participant teachers in the study felt compelled to make changes in their lesson plans to accommodate their students' needs. Having this type of flexibility enabled teachers to deliver lessons that connected students to a learning experience tailored to their personal needs and inquiries. For example, Edison stated,

Sometimes I have to throw out a lesson plan so we can talk about an optional seminar, an optional speaker, and students are curious. I guess I designed my curriculum to be wide ranging and abstract, but it can accommodate the variety of students' interests and it can be individualized.

According to the participants, when students trusted the teacher and their peers, their critical consciousness or "conscientization" (Freire, 2000) increased. In this way, they grew their ability to analyze, problematize (pose questions), and affect the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural realities that shaped their lives.

Transformation

Participant teachers believed that they helped their students situate themselves in a historical context, with the understanding that they are never independent or separated from the social and historical influences around them. Students began to see how they inherited values, beliefs, and ideologies that needed to be critically processed. According to all participant teachers, this process of change occurred in the classroom through praxis, dialogue, and critical reflection, ending in action. Teachers relied on critical

pedagogy techniques that allowed for all parties to take risks when deconstructing topics.

In Christian's view,

I think one of the main components of effective changes in social justice come from critical pedagogy. Um . . . personally when I was a student in high school, I think back and I did not have any critical pedagogue I could trust, and I was very limited as far as the scope of social justice, like you study the civil rights movement, you study the subjugated groups in history, but there isn't that sense of deconstructive power, advocating for change and see what you can do as a citizen and being expose to a great variety of beliefs.

Clearly, Christian understood the importance of being a critical pedagogue, engaging students in the analytical process of deconstructing the topics to develop the understanding and the pursuit of social justice in his teachings. The SSA's approach to curriculum prepared students with the necessary tools to engage in effective dialogue. Christian further explained how an effective critical pedagogue, in his opinion, carefully chooses the material and adds to the relevance and connection students make to the various social issues they discuss in class. He noted:

I think that a good critical pedagogue would select texts based on social justice, would select various lessons with a multicultural attitude, and, um, be prepared to take risks exposing some of the injustices of our society, going beyond reading and writing, but reading and writing that actually matter, and that it affects people's lives.

Given the complexity of the issues covered in the classrooms of these five participant teachers, I observed how students took some abstract concepts and made them concrete through their own lived experiences. Christian emphasized that this was a difficult process. For example, he covered controversial topics such as ethnocentrism, and asked

his students: “In what ways we are ethnocentric? In what ways do we value and privilege our own cultural practices and ethical beliefs when dealing with issues of gay marriage or social issues from other countries?” Christian stressed that it was important to let students apply their newly acquired skills and stay away from the danger of trivializing the topics. The topics the teachers selected were considered critical and of pressing importance for the students to understand. In Christian’s experience, students could understand the theory, but it was essential for them to understand how it affects people. Christian complicated matters further when he stated,

We talked about, in the first class, about honor killings um . . . in Pakistan and Afghanistan, under the Taliban and sort of by bridging it through the lived experiences and doing that so it doesn’t trivialize the events. I think we can if the point of the lesson is to teach the theory behind it. So teach the idea of ethnocentrism and you are simply using like a major issue in social justice and social injustice, like honor killing, as a tool to teach the concept.

The teacher participants all made intentional efforts to incorporate social justice issues that moved away from the idea of abstract concepts and made them more concrete by engaging the students’ lived experiences. According to Christian,

I think that we often would trivialize the practice itself because just rather than learning about it for the sake of learning the importance of it, sometimes we as teachers, and I am guilty of this, is a big challenge, make it seem like much about the big idea generally. It is not just an example; it is something that affects people and affects them in a very meaningful way!

When students acknowledge that our society does not always live up to its ideals, they are more likely to want to work towards change. Teacher participants believed that the first step towards social justice is making students aware of discrepancies among the ideals

and the conditions of people's lives in their community, their country, and around the world.

Every participant felt that dialogue was best driven by a teacher who facilitates it through establishing class rules with the students and creating a stress-free environment to foster free expression. This sentiment is consistent with Bartlett's (2005) claim that when teachers create conditions of friendship and trust, they encourage their students to engage and establish more intimate relationships with the students. Most participants believed that their teaching techniques helped sustain their dialogical experiences in the classroom. Overall, the participants not only emphasized dialogue as a major teaching tool, but also the method in which any educator can reach all students.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the role of promoting critical dialogue and problem posing. Specifically, I discussed problem posing and how teachers used various strategies to transform the classroom experience. I argue that teachers can foster critical dialogue by serving as facilitators, going by first name basis, and creating a stress-free environment. The findings revealed that teachers could transform education, aiming for the development of a more democratic society in which equity is achieved by understanding the complex roles of culture, power, and domination. This is consistent with Lynn and Jennings's (2009) claim that open dialogue in the classroom contributes to transforming students' experiences and understanding of social issues.

The findings also revealed that despite the relatively short length of the summer program, teacher participants developed close friendships with their students. The role of

trust in establishing meaningful dialogue proved essential. Developing trust and critical dialogue, however, does point to the idea that schooling, when teachers lecture students without engaging them in critical discussion, is distinct from education, where students play an active role questioning and challenging the lesson with greater authority. These findings are aligned with Freire's (2000) claim that dialogue is a pedagogical process whereby teachers and students engage in learning through discussion and debate of sociopolitical realities. Consequently, Freire's (2000) argument manifested in the classroom, as teachers in my study rejected the banking model of education by instituting the problem posing method of teaching.

Finally, critical dialogue represented an effective approach to teaching students to challenge the dominant group's ideologies and discourses as they developed respect and appreciation for people's differences. Southern School of Art served as a center of critical questioning of moral concern, pushing students to become agents of social transformation where social, economic, and educational equity were central to developing a more just, caring, and democratic society.

CHAPTER VII

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF THE ARTS: USING ARTS-BASED ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE LEARNING AND PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE

The arts can broaden and deepen education in ways that cross class, race, gender and ethnicity (Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013; Louis, 2006). However, some researchers and educators argue that it is not the arts themselves, but the pedagogy that is used within the arts that truly broadens and deepens learning (Stovall, 2006; Yaakoby, 2013). In this chapter, I explore how teachers incorporate the arts in their pedagogy to encourage students to work in collaboration, to think creatively as they generate new ideas, relationships, and work products, as they seek solutions to and alternative representations of global social issues.

The Southern School of Art offers an Art class for students interested in improving their artistic skills. Participant teachers explained how these students work collaboratively throughout the summer, developing their language as artists. The group projects are typically large-scale works that are then installed and displayed in the school's gallery space on a weekly basis. When I entered this particular area of the school, I was transported to a world of contemporary art unlike anything I have ever seen in a public school before. It was obvious to me that these students were expressing their views and feelings through art work that involved a diverse range of socio-political and cultural studio practices, translating their studio work to a museum/gallery space. In this chapter, I explore how adolescent students take it upon themselves to make connections

among various disciplines, incorporating their artistic work into their learning experiences in order to meet their class objectives.

All participant teachers felt that the arts deepened students' educational experiences and served as a vehicle to understand and bring awareness to social justice issues. These critical pedagogues incorporated the arts into their lessons, facilitating the understanding and awareness of controversial issues that promote critical thinking. They viewed social justice as human rights, grounded in freedom of thought, expression, and assembly and used this approach to produce and interpret the work of existing artists as well as the students' artwork. In this chapter, I also explore the efforts by educators to engage with public school space as a form of social justice pedagogy manifested through the following topics: the impact of the arts, student-driven projects, the significance of freedom of expression, the importance of involving the five senses, pushing the boundaries of social justice, students' reactions to specific performances, how history comes alive, the significance of guest speakers and seminars, the impact of the right images in the right spaces and how pictures speak louder than words. These topics reveal the power of the arts when teachers use art-based activities to meet their specific class objectives. Finally, I discuss how teachers receive feedback from students to continue designing lessons that empower their students to become change agents.

The Impact of the Arts

Going into the study, I suspected that art-based activities would be primary teaching strategies teachers used in order to meet their objectives. I was pleased to observe the amount of artistic work guided by Area 1 and Area 2 teachers and created by

students that helped complement the teaching and learning experiences of these young people. When discussing this topic with the students, it became clear that these teaching strategies were making an impact on their summer school experience. During the students' group interview I asked: What were some student-driven artistic projects that most impacted you? Why?

Alice: One of the student-led performances I enjoyed the most was the poetry slam. A few people performed classic works from their favorite poets, and then a ton of people performed their own poetry-and again, only a few of these people were at Southern School for English. I was in tears by the end of the night.

Teachers believed that the school culture of democratic freedom motivated students to engage in producing art-based work. Students were free to express their feelings, draw, paint, write, create short films, and enact any form of personal representation of their human experience. All participants believed that students need to be exposed to a diverse range of topics, particularly topics dealing with inequity and social injustice. These topics were central in the classes I observed, encouraging students to become advocates for justice in their own way. Alice captured this sentiment when she stated:

Nobody left any topic off limits; there was poetry about racism, black lives matter, sex, rape, xenophobia, politics, etc. About three or four poems in, the crowd started giving standing ovations to every single performer-and they deserved it. One poem was about catcalling and it was the best one of the night (and that's saying something). This girl was so passionate and had the whole audience locked in with her words. The combination of her moving poetry, and the fact that I was surrounded by so many of my accepting, loving, and intellectually inspiring friends, drove me to actual tears. I rarely cry, but I couldn't help it. And I was not the only one in tears, trust me.

Alice's feelings were shared by the rest of the students I interviewed. Teachers valued the opportunities presented by their schedules in order to accommodate students' performances and the number of students attending these performances. The idea of collaboration in an environment that promotes critical thinking, critical inquiry and independent research, emerged as a necessary skill in order to produce work that led to engaging the mind and the soul of each participant.

When inquiring about the types of projects produced by the students, I learned that there were no boundaries. Teachers highlighted many different art projects particularly dance concerts that were anything but traditional. For example, they commented how, in the students' last performance, the dancers threw around flower, salt, paint, mulch, dirt, and other messy substances all over the stage. Edison stated:

You could see that these young men and women had put so much effort and time into the performances. The heart in these people was visible in every move. The choral concerts were incredible as well.

Teachers appreciated when students had the strength to break the traditional boundaries set by traditional social and school settings. Students put their heart and soul into anything they did. Teachers tapped into the students' hearts because when they felt passionate about something they produced work that conveyed a strong message. Edison continued, "Again, this was the farthest from traditional that a chorus concert could get. The effort and heart and complete love of the craft could be seen in these girls' faces as well." The teachers and the students agreed that these artistic presentations left a tremendous effect on the audience. Students felt the passion, experiencing a variety of

emotions that facilitated the understanding of the messages their peers were trying to convey. Student, Hanna, for example, said: “Just by listening, you knew they were absolutely in love with what they were doing. And that’s an inspiring sight to see, that kind of raw passion in the faces of people your own age.”

Teachers and students found SSA to be a place that helped people liberate their minds and souls as they searched for answers to the many social issues affecting our world. They articulated that having the freedom to do art-based activities that pushed the limits was what made the summer experience so liberating and unforgettable.

In Area I classes, teachers might have had a more difficult time incorporating the arts in their curriculum because their subjects tended to be more discussion based on reading assignments. In Bruno’s Social Science class, students made use of their creativity to develop projects that included an imaginative approach with their available resources. Bruno tried to find opportunities for his students to work in collaboration as they created products that would enhance the material covered in class. Bruno believed that creating a curriculum that adhered to the classroom objectives designed by teachers, should include students’ creative thought and student-driven projects.

Student-driven Projects

Teacher participants agreed that students must have the freedom to explore topics and to conduct research that they would then present to the rest of the class. In all disciplines, students were encouraged to illustrate their topic involving various forms of artistic products, including visual aids—such as power point presentations, drawings and creative posters—as a means to foster creativity, apply newly learned concepts and

promote awareness. Students took the responsibility of conducting research and preparing presentations very seriously, even when there was no formal assessment by the teachers. According to the teachers, students were motivated to learn because they felt compelled to produce an educational piece that they could feel proud to share with the rest of the class. In my second interview with Bruno I asked: What work produced by the students this year stands out and why? “The one I really enjoyed it is the one presentation they did on drones.” He shared his initial hesitation exploring this topic because he knew the students did not have much information about drones. Students worked in groups during one class period. Most of the visual aids and artistic work was created during their own time. Bruno was concerned about the amount of time the students had to do the project, questioning the quality of work they would be able to produce before their presentation day. He was pleased to see how much information the students had gathered when they did their final presentations. He noticed they had a lot of relevant information on the advantages and disadvantages of using drones. According to Bruno, they had more cons, which Bruno thought was good and it showed they spent an adequate amount of time researching and developing their conclusions about the topic. Bruno emphasized that,

They were just thoughtful about how this is changing warfare, but I thought that it was really awesome how they went into it not having much information about it and came out with this huge list that was well informed and that they could share it with others as well, that one definitely stood out to me.

According to Bruno, the students’ growth from the beginning of the project to the end was significant. He enjoyed the collaborative work the students did, demonstrating their independence as learners. The final product was in the form of a PowerPoint presentation

and three-dimensional posters using various visuals to articulate their main points across to their peers. They incorporated terminology and concepts acquired during class, as well as the effective visuals they created. They established goals and objectives within their groups, and group rules based on work ethics discussed in class, which according to Bruno, they applied to their respective groups very effectively. All of the collaborative skills established by teachers and students from the beginning of the summer program helped them work independently. This particular project gave the students the opportunity to teach about drones to students from other Area classes; they presented their work in the dining room area during lunchtime.

The peer teaching experience was effective according to Bruno, because teachers and students provided feedback after the presentation. Their feedback showed how much students learned and how effective their creative visual aids were when discussing drones. Some of the advantages the surveyed students highlighted were: they could save lives; they were low cost, and low risk; they had better operational hours (without a human pilot) accuracy from greater distance, they were lethal to the enemy spying; and they increased surveillance. Some of the disadvantages were: limited abilities, civilian losses, counterproductive and destabilizing, too easy (drone warfare makes combat too easy by diminishing ethical decisions), work and personal life balance, among others. Students discovered how drones have changed the playing field in war, as well as the quality and complexity of aerial photography, contributing to viewing the world from new angles. Some students explained their responses giving specific, detailed information in their surveys. For example, they wrote,

There are drones with cameras that have the capacity to shoot pro-level aerial photos and videos, with the ability to capture slow-motion videos and 12 megapixel photos. Some drones also have steady grip device that lets people control the drone's camera from the ground using their smart phone as a viewfinder.

Bruno thought that this type of project gave students the opportunity to investigate current subjects that related to their lives and to connect them to their lessons in class.

This project not only helped the class, but also the rest of the summer school participants, to gain a better understanding of the implications of technological advances in our society today.

Incorporating the arts into research presentations helped illustrate the main point of the research project and contribute to the collaboration of a group of students. The fact that their projects were going to be shared in front of their peers motivated the groups to work harder, to create effective visuals, and to pay attention to detail. Creativity, collaboration and application of newly acquired skills contributed to the quality and significance of their presentations.

Video Projects

Group research activities were incorporated into the lesson plans by all teachers at SSA. These educators believed that social justice education could be promoted through the production of videos, blending the students' critical ideas that generated their approach, using almost no boundaries among their production, social critique, inquiry and activism. This approach, according to participants and Graham (2007), was grounded in the individual characteristics of students' communities and thoughtful about how political power and culture work to enhance or limit human potential.

During Christian's interview he shared the benefits of collaborating with fellow teachers to accomplish his class objectives and to lead students to develop their ideas in the form of a film. I asked: What work produced by the students this year stands out and why? According to Christian the video projects stood out "pretty nicely." Christian explained that the video projects the students created were put together by all Area II teachers into a moving film that was showed to the entire school during lunch. Christian stated, "And in my class we did a screen of each of the submitted videos, um...they stood out for the very reason that they are tackling the big issues that they are talking about on campus." He referred to issues dealing with social justice and equity covered by all teachers in their classes. Christian also pointed out that the students' work that was particularly effective for him was the class discussions that followed the video presentations and the students' reflections upon their own personal experiences. Christian stated,

Some of the other work that was really effective was the discussions in class. Not only had they reflected upon their own personal experiences, upon their own oppressive systems, but also um a critique of the structures themselves, their anecdotal experiences. Not only critiquing their own, which is important, but also seeing where the power structures that allows these anecdotes to happen. Students wrote on their journals about that, and seen their responses were powerful as a reflective piece.

Christian's facial expressions and excitement conveyed much joy and pride in the work of his students. He was eager to share his personal views about the students' videos, particularly the ones that he considered as very effective when trying to showcase a controversial topic in a creative way. I asked Christian: So as far as the videos, which one

stands out, that you did not expect to turn out the way it did? Christian talked about a couple of videos he considered the most effective pieces; he commented on a video students made about gender preference. Students came up with the idea to create a bathroom scene where a male student dressed as a female, uses the women's bathroom and as he exits the female student asked: "I thought this was a girls' bathroom, why is he here?" and then the other female student says: "She identifies as a woman, so she is a woman to me." Christian reflected,

So seeing that and seeing that the students are engaged with the issues the transgender community faces, it says a lot and I think that they are able to create a powerful effect with those and by that context of that expectation. I was very pleased to see that!

Christian also discussed other projects that impacted him because he was able to informally evaluate the student's growth dealing with the variety of topics discussed throughout the summer. Through the video productions, students showed their understanding of the terms and concepts covered as well as their capacity to creatively convey a message. Christian said,

Another video that resonates with me and my students was: "How beauty is socially constructed to be a very European look." Where an African American student, it was shown putting on makeup. You see the process but you don't see the result of the process, you just see the back of her head. And then um, by the end she is essentially in white face, which is essentially this image of this young African American student is being bombarded with by the media that that beauty is a need to conform.

Christian was passionate about teaching and bringing awareness of social constructions that sometimes cloud the vision of students. He noted how the media contributes to

perpetuating what ideal images constitute beauty, influencing the way students view and perceive their own bodies. He elaborated on how the topic of beauty opened paths for discussing issues of eating disorders and compulsive behaviors young people develop in order to conform to the ideal of beauty. The powerful messages of these video images helped students open up during class discussions and share some of their own personal experiences. Students had a chance to analyze and discuss issues that were never discussed in regular school settings. Christian was thankful for the opportunities to explore issues that concerned his learners and for the use of available technology that facilitated these projects. Christian observed,

You can actually see the emotional damage that that causes, and being able to show and share that, but also to be able to film it, to be part of it! I thought it was an incredibly brave and courageous movement of activism. It was well received by her peers, a great deal of good response. I was happy with that work. And these were all short little clips from smart phones, fewer than fifteen seconds.

During my interview with Christian, he also revealed his deep concern for fairness, as it related to the video projects. Giving students fair opportunities for exploration and the proper preparation so they could develop ideas to do work that reflected the amount of information they were being exposed to in each class was important. The absence of information could influence the way students reacted to and perceived facts in general, particularly when they were not challenging their pre-conceived notions of the world. For instance, the information found in American history books and English classes is sometimes biased. Christian stated,

If students don't read about how European settlers killed the Native Americans or the horrors of the enslavement of African people or that the concepts of liberty and democracy were intended for the White men only. Then their ideas are not going to fairly represent the actual events.

The success of the video projects, according to the participants, was based on facts and truthful information and how that information was received by their peers. Students should experience a variety of emotions and feelings that connect them to the objectives of the lesson. Video projects serve as tools to help them demonstrate what they are able to create with the information they have acquired through their classes. Teachers reported that the students immersed themselves fully into their video presentation, depicting issues that deeply concerned them and utilizing their available resources to produce relevant original work, which in turn complemented their curriculum.

Freedom of Expression

All participants shared the idea that freedom in an educational democratic setting facilitates critical pedagogy that can sustain teaching practices that are moral and political. Freedom provides room for creating meaningful lessons that had the potential to impact the students' ability to fight for social justice. The responsibility of teachers increased as students developed their views and classroom interactions with others. When interviewing Catherine, she discussed how, in the process of students working on projects and standing up for social justice, they sometimes would shut one another down. This was one of her biggest concerns when giving students the freedom to present their points of view when discussing difficult social justice issues. When discussing her students'

work, the one project that stood out for Catherine was the project about expression and political correctness. Catherine explained,

In part this project for me it was the most ambivalent. Sort of what they came out with and things in my own life I have been thinking about. Like how there is definitely a way that when people are trying to stand for social justice, I think that there is a way to shut people down, when trying to say what is better, what is right.

The project Catherine referred to was completed by a group of four students. The title was “Let Me Speak My Own Damn Mind,” a discussion on political correctness. They defined the term: “Political correctness, the avoidance, often considered as taken to extremes, of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.”

Students presented their video focusing on many statements that people make that are unpopular, such as “Wealthy people should pay more taxes,” and “People on welfare should get a job.” Students presented their arguments on political correctness using labels, such as “racist,” “sexist,” “homophobe,” “anti-Semite,” “bigot,” and the like. They argued that people throw these labels around all the time without understanding what they really mean. They also emphasized the damage done by accusing someone of racism, sexism, etc. Their main point was to showcase how the political correctness movement has gone wrong. They pointed out how the original intent of the political correctness movement may have been good, encouraging people to have tact and sensitivity in relation to others’ feelings around issues of gender, race, religion, physical abilities, sexual orientation and such. Their research project showed that the effect of

political correctness makes people avoid difficult topics altogether. Furthermore, this particular group argued that political correctness hindered the ability to get comfortable in living, studying, and working with people who are different from us. They claimed that political correctness had become a bigger problem than the problem it was intended to address. The video showed mini skits performed by the students showing people getting into trouble for not being politically correct. They pointed out some of the pros of political correctness such as preventing marginalization and destruction of stereotypes. They listed some of the cons of political correctness such as colorblind racism, lack of openness, and suppression of the human experience. After their video presentation, the group engaged the entire class in a lively discussion by asking,

If we can't talk about our feelings, fears, anxieties, aspirations, worries, dreams, concerns, and hopes, how can we ever build trust with those who are different from us? If we can't talk about differences that intrigue us, or things that that we are curious about, without fear of being offensive, then how can we overcome our ignorance about cultures, races, gender preference, even the opposite sex?

Students argued about the use of insults to get their point across and how in public schools this was common practice. Catherine asked the group: "Maybe there are other ways to pursue freedom and equality not using cursing words?" She continued, explaining to the class that the opposite of political correctness is not unvarnished truth-telling. She said, "It is political expression that is careless toward the beliefs and attitudes different than one's own." Students began to listen carefully as they thought about the real meaning of the material presented to them. Will agreed with the teacher when he said

that political incorrectness in its more extreme fashion “is incivility, indecency or vulgarity. Perhaps these are the true alternatives to political correctness.”

The teacher and the students engaged in a heated discussion, trying to figure out in what ways public schools contributed to the problem. Some students stated that their hometowns as well as their schools and places of worship contributed to the problem because there was not enough discussion about these pressing issues; consequently, the lack of knowledge contributed to the division in our society. Lucy stated:

I do believe color blindness is a good example of the point you are making. As when people say I don't see color. You know that is a lie. Now if we continue to self-censor every conversation we have about race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or physical ability, then we are doomed to maintain the very barriers we say we want to overcome.

Catherine paid close attention to the topics and the approaches students selected for their social justice video projects. She did not want students to shut one another down when defending their points of view. She considered it essential for teachers to use awareness of subtle shades of meaning or feeling in any artistic expression coming from the students. Sometimes teachers may dismiss some points students are trying to make, that may not be very obvious. It is important to let students know how they come across, especially when dealing with sensitive topics. Catherine explained:

I think that it is important to have some nuances, strategies so this particular project made me think of that. I told them that too, I tried to be pretty honest in my feedback. Like after they presented, I told them, you made me think about this, I appreciate that.

There were three lessons I learned from the video projects: (a) giving students honest feedback was essential in helping them develop strategies to address difficult issues successfully; (b) teaching students to use appropriate language, images, music, and the like helped to enhance student projects; and (c) pushing students to communicate their message with an awareness of their intended audience. The video projects presented new challenges for teachers and students, giving everyone freedom to choose how to conduct research, how to portray their findings, what to include in their videos and the way they led class discussions to analyze their research findings. Freedom of expression ensured true art-based projects, reflecting the students' interpretation of research findings that enriched lessons in various ways and that were for and by the students.

Involving the Senses

Students were encouraged to try and experiment with various forms of tools that stimulated creativity to produce work that engaged and stimulated the mind, the soul, and the senses. All participants collaborated with the video production projects. This was the first time teachers had incorporated video projects across all disciplines in the school and it became obvious they were experimenting and monitoring the results closely.

Sofia shared her excitement about these video projects noting that it gave students a broad range of options to choose from and created something in collaboration with their groups. It was difficult to select one particular project that stood out for her because there were so many good ones. In Sofia's view, "there were so many good videos; one project that my class did about happiness/contentment stands out." Sofia explained that students showed images of places and things that made people feel content or happy and to

complement their video, they also brought items to engage the class in a creative activity that stimulated their senses. Sofia elaborated,

The way they shared that was kind of experiential, they brought all those different things for the five senses, they presented things that made people feel content and they took us on this little tour, they got us to close our eyes and they put blankets on us, and then they sprayed perfume, and then they fed us some brownies and then they got us to listen to music, it was kind of fun! That kind of got me thinking about different ways of sharing research, so I thought that one was kind of cool!

Students concluded that the senses are what make people equal, regardless of their skin color or personal background; people share the human characteristics that make us more alike than different from one another. Students in class were very receptive to the group's choices of items that would prove their point about happiness.

All participants agreed that SSA was a place that allowed teachers and students to push boundaries, test their senses, and experiment with art. Teachers were able to do many more cross-curricular activities at SSA than in the regular high school that complemented teaching and learning and supported the teaching practices among all participants. Catherine stated,

I think that Southern School is a little more porous than regular school, in that like they are doing so many different things for all of their classes, so like they go to classes, they have different classes, but some of the ideas are seeping in from other classes. Like I saw some things from, like, the art classes, things that theater did that were related to Area II, so um I guess I just have been thinking about how we support one another.

Making connections across curriculum was crucial to the meaningful learning that took place. It was the teacher participants' goal to change the students' lives through

meaningful experiences that they could take back with them and share once they returned to their own schools.

Teachers and students pushed the limits of traditional teaching and learning practices; at SSA, they found space to utilize the arts and allow for freedom of expression. Teachers and students shared the importance of having the freedom to choose the materials, activities, readings, projects and curricula as a whole. It was this freedom that gave teachers the ability to explore the role of abstraction, creativity, connecting all disciplines in theory and practice.

Teachers had the freedom to work collaboratively across disciplines in order to engage all students and to link all disciplines within the same goals of achieving awareness about social justice issues affecting our world. Christian introduced me to the school Spanish teacher, Ana Oliviera, who I was very excited to meet since I also teach Spanish. I had the opportunity to eat lunch with all teacher participants and Ana. She shared relevant information concerning the power of the arts in the Spanish classroom, in particular how it can help illustrate women's rights issues that are not often discussed at the secondary school level.

I inquired about the Spanish curriculum and the significance of the Spanish language, how it connects to the arts and its impact on students. Ana explained that the Spanish class not only offered students the opportunity to improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities in Spanish, but also challenged the students to think critically about contemporary issues and developments in the Spanish-speaking world. Students had opportunities to examine and reflect on pressing questions from a broader

perspective in order to make personal and interdisciplinary connections and apply them in global context.

The Spanish teacher collaborated with the teacher participants in my study to develop a project that was shared with the entire school. Some of the topics addressed in the Spanish program included: Immigration issues of Latinos, assimilation and cultural permutation, identity struggles and diverse origins of Spanish-speakers, Indigenous peoples and the tremendous ethnic diversity in Latin America, human rights concerns, women's rights and activism and social justice in the Americas among other thought provoking artistic representations.

Ana thought that it was crucial to expose students to various issues that connected Spanish to the other subjects and to give students opportunities for a deeper exploration of a given subject. Catherine asked her: "How is the project coming along? Ana responded: "It is going well; students are researching and putting together the final touches on their presentation of femicidio (femicide) that we will be sharing with the entire school on Thursday." The conversation sparked my interest. I was listening attentively as I was taking notes. They continued discussing the project. Catherine explained that students in her class were eager to learn about feminism and women's struggles in the workplace as well as domestic abuse. Ana explained that this year she decided to let the students select topics to research that they did not know much about because she wanted to expand her curriculum and add new themes. Ana stated, "Femicide, quoting the words of Feminist and author Diane Russell, is the killing of females by males because they are female." Ana continued explaining how students were

researching how males commit femicide with sexist motives and how femicide can happen to both girls and infants. The teachers engaged in a lively discussion about how femicide, which according to Ana, applied to all forms of sexist killing, whether they be motivated by misogyny (the hatred of females), by a sense of superiority over females, by sexual pleasure, or by assumption of ownership over women. Bruno added that his students raised the issue of femicide and wanted to learn more about it. Ana encouraged the group of teachers sitting around the table to share the information with their students and to invite them to attend the re-enactment of her students' final project.

Thursday, at the end of the school day, I walked out the courtyard of the school's main campus. There was a big re-enactment of what femicide looks like (see Appendix F). Students represented femicide in a very believable manner that engaged all of the human senses. There was yellow tape surrounding the crime area, bodies were lying all over the crime scene. The bodies of females were everywhere, blood was gushing from various places, and they had bruises, swollen faces, and lifeless bodies in various positions showing the pain and struggle they must have endured before dying. They were portraying deadly violent acts committed by males; femicide took on a real meaning, these horrible crimes are committed in various forms and in many places around the world. Students represented femicide in a very believable manner that engaged all of the human senses. They put much work into acting out and showcasing the horror of what they found during their research. The pain and the suffering of women became convincing through the use of a life-like scene. They used theatrical cosmetics that showed the disgust of the abuse women endure in dramatic ways. Students' bodies had

cuts, bruises, and blood that looked real. The violent scene they created impacted the audience in various ways.

As I walked around the scene, there was complete silence, sadness and solemnity in the faces and body language of the students and teachers who were watching the presentation. I continued to walk around and read the signs students had made with facts and statistics they had researched. These graphics were carefully designed to bring awareness about femicide. I felt a mixture of feelings I had never experienced before, a sense of frustration and deep sorrow. Students presented clear information on the many forms of femicide. The posted information covered the extreme abuse and anti-female terror happening daily. The staggering numbers of deaths caused by femicide that go unnoticed were presented, such as physical and emotional battery, sexual harassment, genital mutilation, forced heterosexuality, forced sterilization, forced motherhood (by criminalizing contraception and abortion), denial of food to women in some cultures, cosmetic surgery, and other mutilations done in the name of beautification. There was additional information displayed in posters next to the bodies, including information on covert killings of women, such as the mass murder of female babies due to male preference in cultures such as India and China, as well as deaths related to domestic abuse. Without a doubt, this presentation was powerful.

Teachers and students agreed that whenever these forms of terrorism resulted in death, they became femicide, a term that most students did not know nor understood before this research project. As I walked around the scene, I thought about Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, the essence of his pedagogy involving performance text

and embodied way of doing social actions. These students were essentially enacting critical pedagogy via critical performance in an attempt to critique and bring awareness to the information they found, inviting the audience to interpret their work, as they became eyewitnesses to the horror. I admired the students' ability to act out the pain and horror and to bring awareness to everyone who wanted to participate. It was truly a shocking artistic manifestation, one that impacted everyone who saw it, one that impacted me deeply.

The Spanish class students' performance on femicide was powerful; the reaction among the viewers was emotional; and they were shocked and frustrated to learn of the magnitude of femicide worldwide. This performance brought awareness to a problem that is more common than what we would like to think.

Students Articulating Connections between the Arts and Social Justice

Edison started class by asking students to define the term femicide and invited them to share their views and perspectives about the work the Spanish class had presented, but the students interrupted him, wanting to know what he thought about the performance from the day before. Edison explained to the class that he really appreciated the effort put into the performance. He added that it took research, talent and creativity to display a presentation of that magnitude. He then engaged students in discussion by asking, "What do you think?"

Cassidy: I wasn't expecting all that blood like! It was shocking to see the statistics of femicide. They had statistics to support their findings, it was compelling. The dead bodies had statistics drawn on their arms and everyone was silent, everyone attending this enactment was moved and solemn.

- Jim: They had signs and effective ways of conveying information. It was creative and powerful.
- Alice: I felt so moved by the way they showed us the pain and suffering so many women experience, not just in our state, but also around the world. It is awful we do not know much about it.
- Ron: I think that by creating that bloody scene, they got their message across clearly. They did a great job pretending to be dead. I kept looking to see if they were going to move, but they didn't.
- Tomas: Domestic violence is a huge issue! Even in school you see guys being abusive with their girlfriends. It happens more often than not.

The teacher led the discussion about the importance of bringing awareness to young people about the topic. He explained that education is necessary to raise awareness and having this awareness could contribute to stopping the problem. Students made connections to what they knew in their own experiences and many confessed how little information they had before they attended the presentation. The dramatic way the Spanish students chose to present their research findings not only brought awareness but also stimulated the senses in a creative way for the participants to experience the findings. Edison asked the class,

Teacher: In your opinion, what is the role of creativity and social justice?

Liz: I think these two entities are opposing elements. Social justice is something that needs to be steadfast, firm, and equal across the board for every person. Creativity is more fluid and open to interpretation.

Jake: Yes, but creativity can be essential to stand up for social justice.

Teacher: What do you think about the presentation?

Pete: I really never thought about femicide as a real problem. It helped me to see the problem from a different point of view. It was convincing! The

way those guys acted it out and the information they shared was powerful!

The impact of this particular presentation was tremendous among students and teachers. Not only did it stimulate the senses—sight, sound, touch, smell, etc.—but it also gave voice of those female victims who have been and continue to be silently abused around the world. Because of its dramatic nature, students were able to pay close attention to detail, internalizing the messages and reflecting on the reality of the problem affecting females.

Jen: I think the artistic enactment provided a fresh medium for education. Most students are used to absorbing information through lectures, power points, furiously scribbling notes, and memorizing vocabulary. The artistic way these guys represented femicide, offers a more debatable, interpretable source of information that encourages discussion and exploration.

The arts surely offered new paths for students to create ways of presenting their research findings and to push all the limits traditionally instituted in the regular public school setting. The invitation to analyze this particular learning experience gave students the opportunity to recognize the value of creativity when producing an educational presentation. They emphasized that it brought awareness to them about a topic that they had not been exposed to before. After the presentation of femicide, I noticed the topic seemed to have gained precedence among the topics discussed in class.

Participant teachers made an effort to provide spaces in their lessons to discuss the meaning of the project and to support the efforts of their Spanish teacher colleague

and her students. The freedom to collaborate, and the support for one another, proved to be an effective way of teaching and promoting social justice across the disciplines.

History Comes Alive

Participant teachers used theatrical presentations to promote awareness and understanding of controversial historical social issues. In Catherine's class, students were exposed to critical lessons by using powerful images to stimulate the mind of all students. These images also helped students explore the world through different lenses. They began to see the impact of social dominance and structural inequities in their own communities and their own relationships with the dominant power system. One of the objectives of all teacher participants was challenging the way students viewed history and the world by providing multiple perspectives to view a situation.

When Catherine planned her lessons, she thought about the arts and critical pedagogy and how she could incorporate them most effectively to meet her objectives. Selecting creative texts, in the form of a reading or in the form of a video/documentary, was an important tool as a vehicle for students to learn new ideas. For instance, she selected a piece of documentary theater by Anna Deavere Smith called *Twilight: Los Angeles* (<https://vimeo.com/17891143>). In this documentary, Anna performed a one-woman play and her depiction of the events that followed the Rodney King beating as a major trigger for riots; the issue of police brutality emerged into the media spot light, exposing the long-lasting history of police violence towards ethnic minorities. This documentary offered students perspectives on police and civilian relations from both sides, examining the root of racial disputes that ultimately culminated into destructive

civil uprising in Los Angeles, California. These 1992 historical events were told through the brilliant personifications Anna Deavere Smith performs on stage, transforming herself into Black, White, Latino, and Asian people. She became Mrs. Young-Soon Han, an Asian lady (Liqueur store owner) Shelby Coffey III, a former editor from LA Times, Sgt. Charles Duke (Special Weapons and Tactical Unit, LAPD), an anonymous male juror (Simi Valley Trial), Maxine Waters (congress woman D-CA), Elaine Young (Real Estate Agent), Henry “Keith” Watson (Co-Assailant of Reginald Denny) and Cornel West (Scholar). She captured the audience using only monologue and their exact words throughout her one-woman show. This documentary-play unveiled a previously untold perspective of the riots intended to promote conversation and action. It helped teachers who were interested in changing the way students in general, view and solve racial conflicts and social injustices. Catherine was interested in offering students different ways of understanding difficult issues in more impactful and effective ways.

Having the freedom to examine history using innovative visual and theatrical representations is essential to resolving community issues. After viewing the documentary, students discussed different perspectives of reality, political stakes, issues of racial tensions, and police brutality. Catherine believed that by using media texts such as this one, she helped students think critically about important issues and encouraged them to contemplate the value of how artists creatively explore issues. Catherine believed that the other important parts of her lessons were the role of art and its creative process using critical pedagogy. She noted,

Like going back to what I was talking about, how one important part of critical pedagogy is not knowing what the end is, the process is very important. Also creativity is really crucial in developing that kind of better world social justice struggles are calling for, so to give students a chance to create it gives them the opportunity to explore, and with freedom.

Catherine and the other four participants conceived that by exposing students to various forms of arts and theatrical performances, they were opening new avenues for communication. Furthermore, by giving students opportunities and the freedom to create, they were enriching the future contributions made by the students. The carefully chosen teaching materials also enhanced the process of transformation students go through during the summer. Critical pedagogy aided by the arts, provided experiences that impacted students in various ways. The freedom to create art and interpret the art created by others provided students with opportunities to deconstruct the inequities in their own world.

Hence, all teachers felt the work of Anna Deavere Smith was effective in showcasing historical events in a very creative way; this helped students understand the historical issues that have scarred our nation, from various perspectives, acquiring new understanding and strategies when addressing social issues and injustices that are deeply rooted within the American psyche. Controversial issues such as racial tensions among communities, police brutality, Black sadness, and others were taught through the use of dramatic performances involving creativity, freedom, and theatrical expression.

Teachers continuously searched for effective teaching materials and guest speakers that could complement their pedagogy. They looked for people that would be

willing to come to the school and teach educational material that met the social justice objectives of the SSA's summer program.

Art-based Speaker Series and Seminars

The campus was alive with a variety of visiting speakers, performances by students, faculty, and guests, field trips and expeditions, demonstrations, film series, and optional seminars. In many ways, these offerings constituted a second curriculum linked with classroom work and enriching the school community's experience through the afternoon into the late evening every day of the summer session. As one of Christian's students, Joe, put it, "One of my favorite aspects was the optional seminars. They rocked my world . . . literally."

Because all classes at SSA emphasized social justice issues, the teachers carefully considered which topics to incorporate into their lessons. Students and teachers relied on the arts as a vehicle to make connections as new topics were introduced. Participant teachers believed that students needed to have various resources that would enhance the body of scholarship that they brought with them. Teachers volunteered to offer seminars in the evenings that students had the choice to attend. Catherine was pleased to share how, through these seminars; she was able to help students make critical connections with difficult or new topics that they had not explored before. According to Catherine:

Like I gave some explicit social justice issues seminars, one of them was about feminism, other one about Black movement, like these were really popular, like over 100 students attended, um, a lot of the students came to me and asked questions about what they were really interested to know, how to apply what we had talked about in the seminar, like with people who weren't at SSA.

Catherine believed that the high level of attendance in her seminars on feminism and racism was a small step towards planting a seed. Because attending seminars was voluntary, the great number of attendees showed that students were eager to learn more about these topics and their desire to bring awareness to their peers once they got back to their respective schools and communities. Catherine stated,

I think that that was a really good sign, how they were thinking about it and making connections between the people who do not care or are antagonistic about these things, antiracism or feminism. They were trying to think strategically about: hey how do I invite people to be part of this conversation. How do I find other people who are already having this conversation?

The optional seminars became a necessary tool to bring students together in front of teachers or guest speakers who could convey relevant messages using different approaches. Most of the teachers offered seminars on various topics in the evenings. Catherine and the other teacher participants agreed that the seminars became an avenue for artistic manifestations to emerge, for conversations to expand and for connecting people with similar interests. Catherine argued,

So I think that students like the artistic seminary presentations. One thing that I remember from the feminist seminar, it was for some students very exciting to be in a place where people really cared about feminism. That was huge! Because they can stay in touch with those people, just the sense that other people care about these issues. It is huge impactful, from a place that is not a parent, so you don't feel isolated. I wish that they get out of the experience all the different ways of thinking but also maybe confirming some of the social justice stuff that they already hold.

Particularly with feminism, many students did not understand the concept until they were exposed to the presentations and the discussions. Feminism was viewed by some as

something with a negative connotation. During my student group interview, I realized that students also valued the chance to attend seminars and presentations because it changed them in positive ways. Student Claire, for example, said,

The seminar on feminism was really good. I kind of had an idea about it going into it, but there is always a negative association with feminism. People in general don't like it if I say I am a feminist. The speaker presented feminism as a positive thing. We learn about what it really is and it is a good thing. I am a big time feminist! I do have radical ideas! I like SSA because it exposes you to so much, like social justice issues we don't normally discuss in school.

Participant teachers agreed that their teaching and presentations were well complemented by the participation of a variety of speakers. In order to help students make connections, they believed it was necessary to expose them to various forms of artistic expression that in turn addressed various aspects of controversial issues.

Art-Based Speakers and seminars provided opportunities for sharing the work and ideas of many different contributors to the educational arena. As the prominent artist, Pablo Picasso, put it, "Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth." Art often captures the intimate human sensitivity and perception in creative ways and it serves as a powerful tool to promote justice.

Pictures Speak Louder than Words

Photographs can produce a variety of feelings in any given audience. Teachers used images to stimulate dialogue, critical thinking and generate analytical ideas. When interviewing Bruno's students, I asked: Which speakers do you remember the most and why? Lizzy stated,

My favorite speaker was Endia Beal, a photographer who is actually locally based (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1d82oUrj3A>). She has done photography and art projects based on racism and women's rights. She was hands-down the best speaker we had, and I actually got to speak with her and talk about her journey as a photographer after her talk. There were about 50 students who stayed afterward to talk to her because she was so inspiring. She has a lot of published and recognized work, and I was absolutely honored to even be close enough to her to talk to her.

Endia Beal turned out to be one of the favorite guest speakers for many students. She shared some powerful images depicting African American women in the predominantly White corporate world. She explored the perspectives of women of color and how they have to re-invent themselves to conform in spaces traditionally occupied by White people. In her presentation, she shared some social experiments conducted on various females, White, Black and White men. She discussed the testimonies of women who changed their look, name or personal information in order to get hired for a job. She questioned the impact that these alterations had on women of color and what we could do to get rid of stereotypes people have about Black females in particular.

The challenge for the teachers was to select speakers that complemented their curriculum and that could reach these young people in a way that they could not. Trusting the message they brought and the manner in which they chose to present their topic was essential. Teachers understood that some speakers could be controversial, but at the same time they trusted the skills students were developing. Teachers always allocated class time to debrief about the speakers and seminars students attended.

As Sofia's class started, students were enthusiastically discussing their views about Endia Beal's presentation. They had some questions and made some observations

about the significance of racism in the work place. During my class observation, I noticed how the White students wanted to know more about the idea of being Black in a White corporate setting. Sofia asked the class:

Sofia: So what do you think African American women go through when facing an interview for a corporate job?

Jen: I think that it is tougher for them; many corporations don't want to hire Black women, perhaps because of the stereotypes.

Joe: Yes, the pictures and testimonies during the presentations made it clear; we are a very racist society. It is much harder to be Black.

Anna: I felt bad for them! It is not fair to study, get an education and finally when you try to get a job people may not hire you because of the color of your skin or your afro. Nobody should have change who they are to get a job!

John: I felt uncomfortable, more aware of my White privilege and sad for these women.

In this interaction, students expressed their views and new awareness about the journey many women of color experience in the work place. The hidden feelings of fear and discomfort by the White men were clearly illustrated through the social experiment Endia Beal conducted to prove her point. Students had not thought about the deep implications of being a Black in a predominantly White world, particularly for women in the corporate world.

In short, selecting provocative images, whether in the form of photographs, drawings, paintings or motion pictures was crucial to stimulating the senses, demonstrating a point or simply telling a story. Participants believed in the power of visual arts because it provoked various emotions, interpretations and connections that

were unique to each individual student. The concept of beauty was different to each student and through visual arts; teachers could connect art to historical events, ethical discussions as well as illustrate various key points of a given lesson.

In Christian's class, he continued with the topic of morality and wanted to connect it to the topic of beauty. He encouraged the class to take a minute and brainstorm ideas that came to their minds when thinking of the word, beautiful. He then asked students to share their list with the class. For some students, beauty was determined by what most people consider to be pleasing to the eye, for others not so much; beauty was sometimes unpopular and unique. Some of the words students selected to describe beauty included: symmetrical, something that speaks to you, positive attributes, ethnic pleasing, artistic, art tech, gothic, pretty, warm, likeable, accepted, valued, good, noticeable, intriguing, resolution, music, and others. Some students began to question what the Western world considered to be beautiful and how it was not necessarily what the Eastern world considered beautiful. The dialogue progressed rapidly into a more analytical conversation and students began to question deeply:

Bobby: Is our idea of beautiful connected to culture?

Gaby: There are things that we consider beautiful because we are influenced by what other people think is beautiful.

Janet: There are art pieces that I don't consider beautiful. Art is very subjective and it should be the area that allows people to express how they really feel.

Christian led the discussion, providing some examples of good art versus bad art. He used images that generated various reactions among the students. Then, he gave context about

the paintings and discussed some of the stories behind each painting he was projecting on the screen.

Students commented on the ones they considered to be beautiful and the ones they considered to be “No, not beautiful.” The colors of the paintings and artwork also evoked various reactions and they expressed their thoughts aloud. When Christian showed the McDonald Arches as one of the examples of how art influences people, the reaction from the students was loud: “I hate the color yellow; I don’t like red; Orange is the worst!” Christian explained that marketing does work, regardless of the way they perceive color. People associate color and the symbol of the arches to fast food, happy meals for children, and the like.

Christian encouraged students to express how they felt as he continued showing various images of paintings and artwork. One of the students, Pete, shared his thoughts on how certain colors spark hunger and restaurants do research on colors to increase their sales, because color influences how much food people consume. Now that the students were engaged in the discussion, Christian invited them to do an activity involving images of artwork. Christian stated, “Let us have an activity where I will show you an image and you will write your thoughts for 45 seconds.” The first image was a painting of Mother Mary with the Holy Child Jesus Christ. The second image was a painting of live flowers with roots hanging, in light colors, and the third picture was a castle and a church, a realistic view of a town, in water colors. The class was writing furiously, while looking at the images. Then, Christian asked the students to share their thoughts:

Gaby: The first painting reminded me of my mother.

Fred: I like that image, it gives me peace . . .

Bobby: The colors and the images express a feeling of love, calm, but it is not a wow factor!

Janet: I really like that image! It is beautiful, nurturing and pure!

Christian asked the students to express their feelings about the second picture, the painting of the flower:

John: I like this one! It is like the progression of life.

Mary: It is the like the beginning of life and the end of life.

Ali: The actual flower is so common. I would have chosen a different flower.

Janet: Because it is showing the roots, it is incomplete, it bothers me!

Then Christian asked the students to express their feelings about the third picture, the one of the castle and the church:

Tom: I like it a lot! Great detailed work!

Anne: It is so beautiful and historical looking. I really think it is beautiful.

Christian: What is missing from the painting? Can you see the artist's name?

Class: No! Who painted them?

Christian: All three paintings were painted by Adolf Hitler. What are some questions we can ask?

Students were shocked to learn that Adolf Hitler could draw and paint those images.

Christian took the opportunity to remind students how knowing the artist who created the

work influences the way we view the work. Christian stated, “We are tainted by the fact that he was such monster!”

The discussion progressed as students connected beauty and how knowing the artist’s name does influence our thinking. Christian took advantage of the opportunity to explain to his students that throughout history, people would write or paint something and disguise their name for various reasons. Samuel Clemens wrote under the name Mark Twain, while some authors chose to write under a pen name as a form of artistic expression, while many authors do so against their will. Authors also use pseudonyms to conceal their true heritage or to conceal their true gender. Students were very attentive to Christian’s explanations as Alice interrupted asking, “So how were women able to create under those circumstances?” Christian continued explaining that sometimes art served as an outlet, as a way to protest unfair and inequitable living conditions. He said that because of sexism and gender inequality, female writers had hidden their true gender behind the veil of masculine pen names for centuries. He named a few examples. Louisa May Alcott used A.M. Barnard. She wrote the famous novel “Little Women” and later in her life became a voice for women’s suffrage and the civil rights movement. Novelist, Mary Ann Evans, wrote under the male name, George Eliot. Alice Bradley Sheldon wrote science fiction under the name of James Tiptree. In addition, Christian explained how in the field of art, Lena Krasner painted abstract expressions under the name Lee Krasner, and Grace Hartigan, another abstract expressionist, painted under the name George.

Christian’s lesson was powerful and meaningful because he was able to connect art and history to the concept of beauty and to help students understand social justice

issues related to ethics and civil rights. This lesson was evidenced by student's reactions of horror and surprise, because it showed them the constant struggle and the preconceived notions that directly affect women and artists across the board.

The participants viewed the art-based activities, guest speakers, seminars and workshops as complementing their lessons, adding to the development and strengthening of new ideas among the students, which was manifested through the arts.

Conclusion

The themes I explored in this chapter suggest that the power of art-based activities stimulated positive learning experiences for all students. Providing students with opportunities to create, interpret and experience various art forms facilitated the comprehension of difficult topics. The benefits of the arts in critical education were consistent with the claims by theorists and researchers such as Maxine Greene (1995, 2000, 2009), Eisner (2004, 2009), and Denzin (2010); arts play a vital role in disrupting the influences of hegemonic economic and political ideologies.

The power of the arts impacted the Southern School of Art summer experience, as the students applied critical thinking skills to create various projects that connected to the lessons learned. Teachers agreed that measuring the power of arts was difficult because it involved often-intangible ways of knowing and learning.

The findings also revealed that despite the subject matter, the arts could be easily incorporated into all disciplines, facilitated by teacher collaboration and cross-curricular planning. For educators, perhaps one of the most important take-aways is that there are no limits in incorporating art-based activities into lessons. By using powerful images,

teachers not only stimulated the mind and the spirit of each student, they created the conditions for students to interrogate their own relationship with the dominant power system and better understand social dominance. In addition, the data clearly demonstrated that when teachers relied on their local resources, guest speakers, local artists, the school teachers, and student's art-based work, they were able to accomplish their goals and communicate powerful messages. These findings aligned with Graham's (2007) claims that teachers can use an approach grounded in characteristics of the local community and attentive to how power and culture work through different areas to enhance or limit the human capacity to critique and protest against it.

Additionally, it was clear that participant teachers and students believed school should be the site for exploration involving all five senses and tapping into the human spirit by using these critical approaches of art in education. The thoughts and experiences of both the teachers and students demonstrated that the arts can broaden and deepen education for all students by allowing creativity and self-expression to grow. These educators demonstrated effective efforts to use the arts to move toward an increasingly socially just society.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of my study was to learn how critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms. Initially, I wanted to study teachers in a public school, but there were various constraints to achieving that setting for this work. Thus, I ultimately chose to do my work in a summer school for gifted students, Southern School of Art (SSA). Ultimately, I'm grateful I was lead to this opportunity, because at SSA—due to the freedoms teachers, and students, held in this special place—I discovered possibilities of what teaching could be with secondary students. In my research, I explored five teachers teaching techniques, largely through their practices and activities in the classroom, as well as their narratives. I also included the students' voices to gain a better understanding of the impact the lessons had on the students. In my thematic analysis, I identified some of the main characteristics of critical pedagogy that challenge us to recognize, engage, and critique (so as to transform) undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that produce and sustain inequities and oppressive social identities and relations (Leistyna et al., 1999). I drew on critical pedagogy theory to analyze the way teachers help students question and challenge dominant ideologies, beliefs and practices. I also interrogated the relationship between traditional secondary school instruction and Southern School of Art's instruction by analyzing the impact of

critical pedagogy techniques on the students, the teachers' perspectives on their own practice and the content of the students' work.

Overview of the Problem

The educational system has traditionally limited the way teachers teach and plan their lessons because of local and national standardized assessments and government mandates. Several researchers have documented the importance of the role of critical pedagogy in the secondary classroom (Giroux, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008; Loughran, 2013). Still, scholars such as Dimick (2016) claim that little has been published about how high school level critical pedagogues design and implement lessons that support existing curricular expectations while applying critically pedagogical principles to stimulate students to become agents of change. My review of the literature was consistent with this assertion. Notably, what appeared uncommon in the literature were first-person accounts of teachers of gifted students who exercise critical pedagogy freely in a public secondary classroom and students who experience these teaching practices. The teaching practices of critical pedagogues previously have been told primarily through the narratives of researchers, theorists and educators from underprivileged schools. I argued that unless critical pedagogues are given the space to discuss the way they enact critical pedagogy in the classroom, their expertise will go untapped. In this study, I provided space for five secondary critical pedagogues to explain the significance of their teaching philosophies and techniques, and their impact on students. I also provided space for students to explain the meaning of the lessons and class activities learned during the summer program. I also observed events in the classroom and around the school, both personally and through

students' work, in order to acquire a fuller picture of the participant teachers' enactment of critical pedagogy.

Review of Methodology

This inquiry was an interpretive qualitative study, for which I used both deductive and inductive forms of analysis and data collected through classroom observations, teachers and students' interviews, documents, and students' work to address the following research question:

How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms?

In the following section, I summarize and discuss the conclusions from my research study.

Summary and Discussion of the Findings

My study was based on the assumption that there are teachers who practice a pedagogy that challenges social inequities and systematic oppression (Freire, 2000). My findings suggested that dialogue and understanding students' backgrounds played critical roles in the enactment of critical pedagogy. The teachers discussed how dialogue was foundational in developing the teaching and learning conditions that allowed room to effectively practice critical pedagogy. They also described the importance of tapping into students' funds of knowledge in order to inform the development of specific strategies to engage all students. The lack of diversity in the Southern School of Art forced me, as a researcher, to carefully observe how teachers managed to address difficult topics of racial privilege with a majority privileged White student body. Teachers relied on various

activities that not only helped build community but also brought awareness to students from different backgrounds. By exposing students to unconventional ways of thinking and interpreting artwork, teachers transformed the ways privileged students saw themselves and how they perceived the world.

In the next section, I specifically address the research question: How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms? In doing so, I summarize the four themes that emerged from the data: historical background and creating a democratic classroom, funds of knowledge/ “hidden treasure,” promoting critical dialogue and problem posing, and recognizing the power of the arts: using art-based activities to enhance learning and promote social justice.

Research Question

How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescent students enact critical pedagogy in their classrooms?

Theme One: Historical Background and Creating a Democratic Classroom

In Chapter IV, I explored the role of creating a democratic classroom and the historical implications for doing so. Findings from the observations, interviews, documents and students’ work revealed several insights, one of which was that by creating a democratic classroom, teachers and students can engage in critical thinking, critical dialogue, and exercise their freedom of expression by collaboratively setting rules. Setting the stage for a democratic classroom begins from day one. All teachers applied a similar classroom management style that enabled them to share power with their students. This finding aligns with the ideas of Giroux (2011) and Kincheloe (2008)

who noted that all teachers need to create the conditions to engage in a constant dialogue with students that questions existing knowledge and traditional power. The research site provided an ideal environment for democratic principles to flourish; teachers had substantial freedom to create their own curricula: teachers exercised their pedagogical ideas and collaborated with other teachers to create a more meaningful learning experience for the students.

My findings also suggest that critical pedagogy is directly connected to democracy. Catherine pointed out that at the SSA teachers were using critical pedagogy techniques across the board, motivating them to be more mindful about the importance of democracy and the political implications of teaching. These findings align with Kincheloe's (2008) claim that

Understanding that education is always political as it supports the needs of the dominant culture while subverting the interests of marginalized cultures, critical pedagogy does not allow such omissions in the curricula it develops. In this context advocates of critical pedagogy work to make sure schools don't continue to be hurtful places. (p. 14)

The political implications of teaching became more significant due to the freedom these educators enjoyed. Participants believed that academic freedom allowed teachers to create lessons suited to their particular discipline and classroom, regardless of social, political, state or national mandates. One significant point that educators can take from this study is that there were no grades, therefore the competition or worry of performing to a test were totally removed from the situation. Students' engagement and performance

was high due to the innovative teaching methods, selected material and strategies implemented by all teachers and due to the intrinsic motivation from the students.

In addition, class size affected the quality of instruction. Public schools in the state do not have limits on the number of students teachers have in class. In the SSA, teachers have a maximum of 16 students per class, and some classes have teacher's assistants who helped teachers with instruction and preparing class materials. The findings suggest that teachers were able to comply with individualized instruction, evaluating students' work, and moving forward with the designed curriculum more effectively. Administrators trusted the teachers to decide what to teach and how to teach it. This trust was evident throughout my research experience, as teachers and students engaged in various activities that involved collaboration and relying on one another's confidence to develop critical learning skills throughout the summer learning experience. The data also supports the effect that trust and freedom had on teacher morale, performance and commitment to crafting powerful learning experiences for all students.

Another significant finding was that along with creating the conditions for democracy to exist, teachers provided students with theoretical lenses and vocabulary and helped them be more reflective through various activities, opening paths for discussing any subject, while promoting a more just environment for all students to participate. As Karla, one of the students interviewed stated, "Teachers teach many concepts we may not be familiar with, we discussed what gender is, what is sexuality, what is gender preference, the teachers actually teach about feminism, racial divide, no topic is off limits here." Accordingly, everyone enjoyed the freedom to learn and discuss any subject in a

democratic driven classroom setting. This finding also aligns with Freire's (2000) and Kincheloe's (2008) teaching about education always being political and that teachers should position social, cultural, economic, political, and philosophical critiques of dominant power at the center of the school curriculum. My hope is that administrators and school leaders can learn from this study and recognize the value of giving teachers the trust and freedom necessary to craft lessons that reach all students, without using grades and standardized testing as a way to measure learning.

Collaboration played an important role in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers collaborated to create lessons, sharing ideas and materials and supporting one another's initiatives when implementing new material. Students responded enthusiastically to the expectations of the interactive setting developed in a democratic classroom setting. The findings showed how students respected one another, and I witnessed no discipline problems or conflicts during the entire summer experience. Perhaps one of the major characteristics of true democracy in the classroom is that it allows teachers and students to discuss and critique various subjects freely. By following the class-established rules, they all helped foster a democratic climate and by being mindful of one another's diverse worldviews, everybody respected and listened to one another without taking matters personally.

By creating a democratic classroom, teachers exercised critical pedagogy, presented students with engaging activities that gave them opportunities to use their newly acquired vocabulary, and reflected upon their work and the work of others. The teachers described the benefits of creating a democratic classroom that gave room for

critical thinking to happen and for creativity to spark new ideas as they respected the ideas of others. Teachers understood teaching as a political practice since they felt compelled to expose students to a world they were unfamiliar with and to emphasize how classroom knowledge, desires, perceptions, values, social relations and ideologies are always connected to power. These findings connect directly to the words of Giroux (2011), “I understand pedagogy as political because it inherently productive and directive practice rather than neutral or objective. For me, pedagogy is part of an always unfinished project intent on developing a meaningful life for all students” (p. 6). The data shows how teachers incorporated readings that connected directly to the speakers’ presentations; strengthened their teaching goal and stimulated the learning process. Also, by incorporating free writing activities, teachers gave students spaces for reflection. When teachers encouraged reflection, the students produced work that met the teachers’ critical objectives of their teaching practices.

Theme Two: Funds of Knowledge “Hidden Treasure”

The findings of my study consistently pointed to the importance of funds of knowledge in the classroom. Teachers asserted that by drawing from students’ funds of knowledge, they gained a better understanding of the students’ backgrounds, discovering their “hidden treasures” which in turn, helped them create a more inclusive environment. Southern School of Art was known for offering students an environment where the arts and the academics come together in unison, giving gifted students the chance to further explore their passion and develop new skills and expertise. Teachers stated that they paid close attention to the students’ backgrounds and the role of funds of knowledge as the

socioeconomic and cultural wealth students brought to the classroom facilitated teaching. Their assertions align with Amaro-Jiménez and Semingson (2011) and Moll (2011) and others whom I cited in Chapter V. The teachers in this study incorporated teaching elements that helped build community and helped students make critical connections with their home, academics and their community.

Notably, my findings also suggest that when teachers take advantage of students' funds of knowledge, they can effectively reach and transform both groups, the White, privileged students and the traditionally marginalized students. This is a significant point because the SSA residential summer program for gifted and talented students introduced a \$500 tuition fee for the first time in 2010 after a reduction in funds from the state General Assembly. Teachers stated that the introduction of tuition adversely impacted the number of students from low income families who were nominated for and attended SSA. In light of this reality, teachers worked consistently to help students in their classes develop awareness of the challenges affecting all groups. Through the enactment of critical pedagogy, teachers provided the conditions for students to understand texts and different ways of thinking, opening new avenues for them to make value judgments. Teacher participants clearly understood the importance of incorporating student's lived experiences in order to be critical and transformative. I found that all five participants' teaching practices aligned with the principles emphasized by Giroux (2011); in his view, "experience becomes a starting point, an object of inquiry that can be affirmed, critically interrogated, and used as a resource to engage broader modes of knowledge and understanding" (p. 157). Consequently, not only did the privileged students undergo

pedagogical transformation, the traditionally marginalized students also transformed, as they began to feel included and appreciated.

The following funds of knowledge-related themes emerged from my data analysis: building community, activities that engage, field trips and exposing students to the unconventional. These approaches proved effective for developing awareness and bridging the socio-economic and cultural gaps among all groups of students. By tapping into students' funds of knowledge, teachers addressed various types of oppressions and students transformed into agents of social change. All participant teachers hoped that all of their students would apply their new awareness to promote social justice in their homes, schools and communities.

Theme Three: Promoting Critical Dialogue and Problem Posing

Promoting critical dialogue and problem posing were the main teaching tools of all teacher participants. The findings from the data suggest that critical dialogue through problem posing contributed to building trust, stimulating critical thinking skills and debunking the traditional banking system of education. Teachers served as facilitators as they posed questions from the beginning of each lesson, steering the conversation as the students engaged by questioning and looking for solutions to posed problems. Critical thinking skills developed naturally as each student explained their perspectives and felt as if their contributions were valuable to the given discussion.

Additionally, the findings suggest that teachers were flexible and able to monitor and adjust their lessons according to the needs of the students. By serving as facilitators and sometimes by changing their lesson plans when necessary, they effectively managed

students' resistance when dealing with controversial issues. They established informal relationships with the students, going by first name basis, and by sharing the power in the classroom. They encouraged collaboration and small group discussions that prompted increased class participation and improved the quality of the discussions. Students were more willing to speak up and engage in small group discussions than speaking out in a large group, particularly in the very beginning of the summer program. Teachers attributed the increase in oral participation to the smaller group setting that gave them a chance to test their theories and thoughts before presenting them to the entire class. This finding echoes hooks' (2010) thoughts when discussing the power of conversation: "Conversations are not one-dimensional; they always confront us with different ways of seeing and knowing" (p. 46). Many of the ideas students discussed came from the selected readings appropriate for their academic level. Teachers believed that these carefully selected teaching materials promoted critical thinking and critical dialogue.

Teachers believed that their mission was to develop a community of thinkers who understood their privileges and were able to forward their new ideas to their communities in an effort to build ties with people who were different than them. These findings support Ott and Burghardt's (2013) claims that teachers can empower their students to be politically and socially aware of the social discrepancies by providing students with relevant readings. Additionally, the findings are optimistic for secondary school teachers because they could easily incorporate these types of teaching materials into their curriculum through selected texts.

Fostering trust and transparency played a pivotal role when developing friendships with the students. Since there were no grades or formal evaluations, it became evident that students engaged in learning motivated by meaningful dialogue, lived experiences, and testimonies of people from various walks of life. Students had to unlearn, learn and relearn their notions of race to resolve their pre-conceived notions of Whiteness as well as their position in the world. Dialogue contributed to the transformation of all participants in the summer experience. Change evolved from praxis through critical dialogue, into critical reflection and culminated into action. The process of deconstructing complex topics through dialogue gave students opportunities to critique one another in an open forum and try to find answers to complex issues. These findings fit with Freire's (2000) notion of the distinct characteristics that must exist in the classroom in order to have dialogue as a pedagogical process. Discussion and debate of sociopolitical realities can be more fluid if teachers reject the banking model of education and allow students to use their experiences, reasoning, and abilities to construct meaning.

Theme Four: Recognizing the Power of the Arts: Using Art-based Activities to Enhance Learning and Promote Social Justice

Teachers at the SSA recognized the power of the arts as a tool to incorporate activities that enhanced and promoted social justice across the board. There were many projects, research work and lessons that used art-based work to teach powerful messages and long lasting learning experiences. However, the teachers in the study argued that it was not the arts themselves that broadened and deepened student learning but the pedagogy they used with the arts that truly mattered. This belief directly connects to what

researchers such as Stovall (2006) and Yaakoby (2013) have argued—that art is a powerful tool to deepen instruction.

The SSA was the perfect setting for teachers to incorporate various art-based projects and for students to explore the possibilities having the freedom to push the limits traditionally found in their home schools. All participants incorporated art-based projects through performing arts, poetry writing, painting, sculpting, re-enactments and many other forms of artistic expression. The findings suggest that when teachers used critical performance, they allowed students to embody an idea, feeling or lived experience; they created a much powerful message for the audience to interpret. Many of the projects presented by the students, guided by their teachers had a distinct purpose, to allow freedom of expression, to make connections between art and social justice, and to bring awareness about the history that may be forgotten or not told at all. These findings align with Louis's (2006) critical performative framework and with the impact of the arts.

The endless possibilities offered by the messages from guest speakers, contributed directly to teaching and the outcome of the lessons presented by the teachers. This was an unexpected finding in the study. Teachers introduced a concept in class and then it would be developed further through attending art-based seminars and speaker presentations. After that, teachers would often begin their lessons debriefing the messages students received from the previous presentations and helped them deconstruct and find meaning through class activities and critical dialogue.

Teachers focused their attention on the role of art education in promoting critical thinking and challenging the status quo. All teachers utilized art-based activities and

projects that directly connected to critical pedagogy, making education more meaningful by engaging students with issues affecting their community. This finding directly connects to Faltis and Abedi's (2013) focus on the role art education can have in promoting critical thinking and challenging the status quo.

The data findings indicate that all participants taught history through art-based activities and gave students innovative material to understand it. History truly came alive in the classroom as presentations from artists and students took place. Participant teachers emphasized that educators need to give students fair opportunities to explore and prepare for the introduction of and engagement with delicate or controversial topics before diving into them.

Teachers also stressed that in public secondary schools the information found in American history books and English classes was often biased toward dominant culture perspectives. Therefore, it became even more crucial for teachers to incorporate in their lessons information from multiple perspectives, particularly from the lenses of traditionally marginalized peoples.

The wide range of art-based activities and projects gave these teachers many options to choose from when planning their lessons. This finding is significant, given the culture of compliance produced at the intersection of standardization, high-stakes testing, and penalizing measures for all who diverge from accountability that currently dominates our public school system. The power of the arts in the secondary classroom offer teachers and students spaces to exercise their imagination, to develop their vision and help find solutions to our problems.

Conclusions

The findings in my study are consistent with previous research that described critical pedagogy as an approach to help students question and challenge the status quo. The findings also supported the literature on the present state of affairs of our public educational system. Although these findings are compatible with previous research, my study also makes several contributions to the field of education and cultural studies. First the teachers in this study, all White, provided narratives that offered personal and professional firsthand information to the dialogue on the enactment of critical pedagogy in the secondary school classroom. In the literature, the enactment of critical pedagogy in the secondary classroom setting has only been documented from the perspective of teachers from underprivileged schools, mostly by researchers and teachers of color.

Second, this study gives teachers and scholars additional insights into the importance of creating a democratic classroom, where teachers and students apply democratic principles by collaboratively developing community rules and sharing classroom power. The study also sheds light on the role of dialogue and problem posing. Teachers benefit by allowing students' ideas to flow and by posing critical questions that promote critical thinking.

Third, the study contributes to the ongoing conversation of the significance of students' funds of knowledge and the endless possibilities for teachers to transform the classroom, enhancing the value of diversity. This study illustrated that educators benefit by tapping into students' funds of knowledge, especially when they do not live in the students' communities and are unfamiliar with students' cultural and linguistic practices.

Also, it demonstrated the effectiveness of innovative art-based activities when teaching about controversial and difficult subjects. In addition, this study biggest contribution is that teachers, through enacting critical pedagogy managed to transform the White students, helping them become agents of change.

Finally, I want to end with emphasizing how this kind of education should be available to all students. A highlight of the research process for me took place when I interviewed the students, and I completed the last interview. The students shared their experiences and testimonies and were teary-eyed because their summer experience was coming to a close. They shared how their lives were touched and changed by this experience; how they felt that every student should have access to an education that allows room for free inquiry and expression. They felt that the public school system was missing one component that makes learning fun—allowing for and freedom of expression that allow for critical pedagogy to manifest. In the final minute of one of the student's interview, Lizzy stated, with tears in her eyes:

Southern School of Art changed me completely. I had no idea I could stretch my intelligence to something so broad and accepting and unbounded. The way I see the world is so different now. I am so lucky to have been part of this life changing experience.

It is fantastic that some students have access to SSA, but all students should have access to this style of pedagogy. Although, I believe that public school teachers can learn from this work and incorporate many aspects of this critical pedagogy in their classrooms (I have done so as a result of my research), the possibilities are limited given the current institutional constraints in public education. Thus, I wonder if, in the interim, those of us

invested in the power of critical pedagogy, should be pushing for more of these programs, in summer and/or after school, and make them accessible and appealing to all students, not just a select few “gifted” students with high financial means.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could explore the impact of critical pedagogy from students’ perspectives at SSA by extending the study to follow students as they return home back to their community schools and into their future lives. Further studies could also explore how SSA summer school teachers teach at their regular public schools. Given the state and national educational mandates, teachers at public schools are more limited to create and freely modify curricula. Perhaps a study that focuses in the way these critical pedagogues navigate through these teaching constraints in the public school setting would help change the teaching philosophies of those who have never experienced the benefits of critical pedagogy.

Final Thoughts

This study taught me several lessons about myself as a researcher and as a teacher. Foremost, I learned to appreciate qualitative research. I enjoyed the journey of collecting data and appreciated working with young people. They brought a special energy to the classroom, an energy that heartened me as a teacher, and now as a researcher. I also learned to be more aware of my biases as I immersed myself in the research setting. I sharpened my ability to be more reflective and reflexive through the research experience.

At times, I wished I could have recorded the entire experience and presented it in a motion picture rather than in written language, particularly since English is my second language. Throughout the writing process, I questioned my ability to provide the reader with a fair representation and interpretation of the events I witnessed.

I also feel very fortunate to have entered the study as a researcher and to have emerged out of this research experience as a more determined and “unbounded” educator. This study has impacted my teaching in public high school by making me a better critical pedagogue in the enactment of my teaching. I ask myself: What does it mean to be a critical pedagogue? It is challenging the status quo—it means that freedom is more than choosing pre-selected options; freedom means having the ability to shape what options are the first ones. It means telling the truth to students about the problems of finding answers to questions relevant to them. It means reading theory with focus on how to practice teaching and learning. It means embracing the idea to take action and reflect upon the world in order to change it is the only key to liberation. When more people are given the opportunity to do so, it means questioning what I was taught and how and why and who is best served. Finally, it means remembering that all knowledge is created within a historical context. It is recognizing that we are all different, but we all have the same needs, one of which is the need to continue to ask questions.

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APPENDIX A**INVITATION LETTER**

Hi!

My name is Sibela Pinochet and I am interesting in conducting a study over the summer at the North Carolina Governor's School. The study is crucial to help me collect the necessary data to write my dissertation to comply with the requirements for completing my PhD degree at UNCG. My topic is: Critical Pedagogy in the Secondary Classroom. We know some teachers do use critical pedagogy effectively, and we can learn from their practices how to make this theoretical approach more accessible to all teachers. We need to know more about how an alternative school might allow us to see possibilities that can be implemented in public schools.

I propose to conduct a research study that would help answer my research question: How do self-identified critical pedagogues of adolescents enact critical pedagogy in their classroom?

The general approach to my empirical research inquiry will be from a critical perspective through a qualitative study involving three or four identified critical pedagogues. You have been identified by your peers as a critical pedagogue because you meet the following criteria:

- Teachers who identify as critical pedagogues
- They develop course of study that understand subject matter and academic skills in relation to where their students come from and their needs they bring to school.
- They embrace teaching as a political act because of their work and position social, cultural, economic, political, and philosophical critiques of dominant power at the heart of the curriculum.

I would appreciate your participation. I would plan to observe you teaching perhaps an entire unit (maybe two or three consecutive weeks) I am open to suggestions. Also I would need to interview you a couple of times. I will be glad to provide you with more detailed information.

Please let me know if you would like to take part in this worthy study.

Thank you so much in advance!

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APPENDIX B**TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS****Teacher Interview Questions****Interview #1**

1. How do you define social justice?
2. How do you define critical pedagogy?
3. What do you believe is the relationship between critical pedagogy and social justice?
4. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
5. How do you incorporate critical pedagogy techniques in the classroom?
6. What do you feel that students bring to the classroom?
7. What are some of the issues you face when teaching these students?
8. What are some of the topics you will be studying teaching in the unit I will observe?

Interview #2

1. What are some of the issues you face when teaching these students?
2. What are some of the challenges that this unit represents for you as a teacher?
3. What are some of the challenges of this unit for the students?
4. How do you develop your curriculum in order to incorporate critical pedagogical techniques in your teaching?
5. Questions about student work TBA...

Interview #3

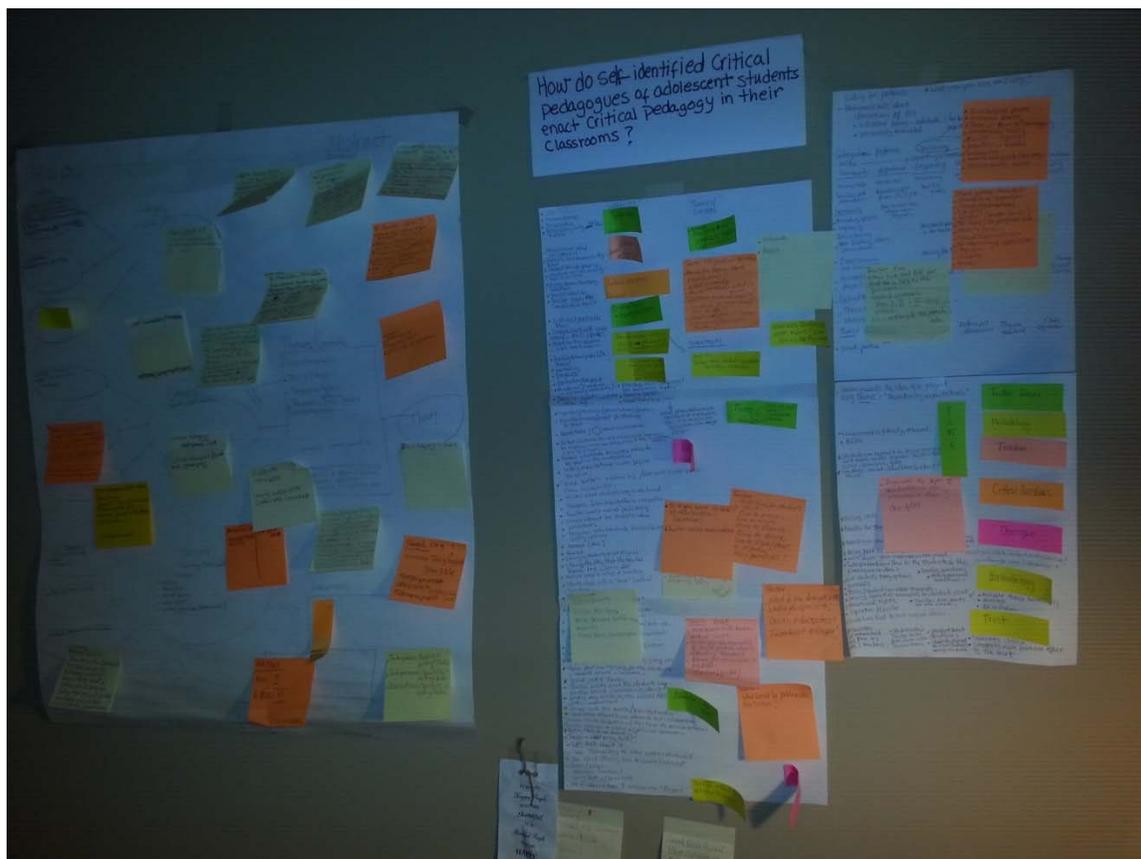
1. What are some examples of social justice issues you and your students deal with during the unit of study?
2. What are the strengths of the class?
3. In what ways have you met your goals teaching the unit?
4. What changes did you have to make and why?
5. Is there anything else that would be helpful for me to know as I observe your classes that would help me get a sense of your work as a teacher?

APPENDIX C**STUDENT GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS****Student Group Interview Questions**

1. How would you describe _____'s class?
2. What are some highlights of the class?
3. What do you think were the goals for the unit you studied?
4. What teaching techniques does your teacher use? What do you think about them?
5. What are some of the topics or activities that have captured your attention and why?
6. What are some of the classroom experiences that have allowed you to think more deeply about topics?
7. What are the topics ideas you have questioned more deeply during this summer?
8. What are you learning?
9. What are some new views and perspectives you have developed about a previous idea you had before coming to this summer program?
10. What are some new arguments you have developed through the skills acquired this summer?
11. How are differing perspectives handled in this class?
12. What do you think the teacher most wants you to know/be able to do?
13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience in this class?
14. How would you describe your experience here at Governor's School this summer?

APPENDIX D

CODES



APPENDIX E
SOUTHERN SCHOOL OF ART FEMICIDE PROJECT

