

MEACHAM, MARK R., Ph.D. *Opening and Entering Critical Spaces: Exploring How High School Students and Their English Teacher Navigate the Critical Literacy Classroom.* (2014)

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This research study focused on how students engaged in Critical Literacy practices and the ways their teacher attempted to foster such practices. The study included one experienced critical educator (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002) from an ethnically diverse school in the southeastern United States. This early/middle college high school setting included one tenth grade English class and one eleventh grade English class taught by a fourth year English teacher. A total of 22 students were invited to participate in the study and 21 returned parental consent and student assent forms. The study drew on multiple data sources, including: audio/videotaped observations, fieldnotes, teacher and student interviews, informal conversations, and student work samples. Data analysis focused on what the teacher did to foster student Critical Literacy practices, how the students engaged in those literacy practices, and the degree to which the practices aligned with specific Critical Literacy components (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez, Tate, & Harste, 2013).

Findings suggested that the teacher used: (a) open-ended questions and model texts, drew on personal experiences and popular culture texts, and positioned students as co-learners in order to foster critical conversations (Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, & Vasquez, 1999; Schieble, 2012); and (b) in order to foster critical text production (Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2003) familiarized the students with rhetorical appeals, and used critical conversations in conjunction with multimodal text sets to model how one might take up a

critical perspective. While fostering such practices, the teacher drew on his personal Critical Pedagogy as well as teaching practices related to a New Literacy Studies perspective. Findings associated with the students suggested they engaged in critical conversations and critical text production by drawing on: (a) personal experience; and (b) new (digital/online) media texts (Janks, 2010). These student literacy practices aligned variably with specific Critical Literacy components. While most students, at one time or another, drew on personal experiences and/or new media texts to engage in critical conversations and/or critical text production, at times other times, certain students did not do either.

Keywords: Critical Literacy practices, New Literacies, Critical Pedagogy, new media text, multimodality, TED Talk, critical conversation, critical text production

OPENING AND ENTERING CRITICAL SPACES: EXPLORING HOW HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THEIR ENGLISH TEACHER NAVIGATE
THE CRITICAL LITERACY CLASSROOM

by

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Committee Chair

For Rebecca, Sophie, and Faith.

Without your unwavering support and confidence this journey would not have been possible.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Mark R. Meacham, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One day, early in the semester, as the sophomore students packed up their bags and left for their next class, their teacher, Malik Shaw (all names are self-selected pseudonyms) struck up an informal conversation with me about the complexities of attempting to teach from a critical perspective. As he reflected on what he hoped the students would learn during that semester, he said, “Sometimes I find it difficult to . . . figure out ways to not just read . . . I don’t want it to be a miserable four months of an experience for them that they just throw into a heap of high school misery.” When I asked him what he does to address this problem, he said, “I try to use as much pop culture [as I can]” so that in the current unit of study students might better understand how the media “reinforces ideas of race.” He explained that social justice issues are “important ideas to ponder,” yet in his own experience as a high school student, he rarely had opportunities “to discuss race or gender.”

Providing a space, then, for students “to not just read” about, but to also reflect and act on social justice issues was an important part of Mr. Shaw’s pedagogy. As stated by several students, his class was their first opportunity to explore how, for example, the media might position certain groups of people in marginalizing ways and what they might do to resist, or counter, such positionings. Critical Literacy research that explores how students might challenge such positioning often examines how, during specific units

of study, students engage in critical reflection on specific texts and what the students do (or might do) to act on such reflections (Avila & Moore, 2012; Morrell, 2005). These kinds of studies often highlight student voices and, thus, inform both teachers' and researchers' understanding of student critical perspective-taking. Highlighting student participant voices is particularly important in this area of literacy learning and research. Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), for example, suggest that Critical Literacy scholarship and pedagogy must attend to "interrogating multiple viewpoints" (p. 383). This particular component of Critical Literacy asks of a text, its producers, and context why some voices, and not others, are heard. Highlighting the voices of those who are marginalized or muted begins to illuminate the positions made available to certain students (e.g., those who are members of non-dominant Discourse communities) and the degree to which they negotiate those positions. Focusing on such marginalized voices may also illuminate the positions offered their teachers as they negotiate the degree of pedagogical autonomy afforded them in their day-to-day decision-making, especially in relation to their states' interpretation and implementation of Common Core State Standards (Avila & Moore, 2012; Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2012). Because Mr. Shaw was most interested in fostering opportunities for student critical perspective-taking, one of his pedagogical goals centered on what he might do to foster their literacy practices. For Mr. Shaw, such opportunities might include engaging in extended conversations that align with specific Critical Literacy components. It may also include engaging in producing critical texts as simple as a 140-character tweet about the social justice issues addressed in a Native American documentary film or as complex as a 15-minute student-

created film about the ways various media might position African immigrants in stereotypical ways.

Despite the fact that Mr. Shaw and, perhaps, other teachers like him, actively reflect on the ways their teaching practices might foster student Critical Literacy practices, previous research in this area is limited (Bean & Moni, 2003; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Lopez, 2011). In particular, more research is needed that explores what high school teachers do to foster Critical Literacy practices that permeate all units of study. Exploring how teachers attempt to foster Critical Literacy practices over the course of an entire semester is important, because it provides a thicker and richer description (Geertz, 1973) of the situational contexts for student and teacher day-to-day interactions. However, research in Critical Literacy practices is also limited in its focus on the student. In other words, few studies (Avila & Moore, 2012; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012) explore not just *what* students do when engaged in Critical Literacy practices, but also *how* they go about doing it. By highlighting student voices, such research, thus, holds the potential for contributing to what educators know about the various ways students might exercise agency. In particular, Critical Literacy research in this area provides an opportunity to explore in detail the complex multiliterate ways individual students might engage in critical perspective-taking toward and through traditional and new media contexts. Such understandings may ultimately aid educators who wish to support students as they exercise agency through their day-to-day interactions.

In their seminal text, the New London Group (1996) noted, “dealing with linguistic differences and cultural differences has now become central to the pragmatics

of working, civic, and private lives.” Given such conditions, they argue, “students must see themselves as active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers - makers - of social futures” (p. 64). This point begins to get at the notion of a world that has become more interconnected and collaborative (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009). One only has to consider the prevalence of Social Networking Sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, to understand this phenomenon.

Researchers and education organizations alike argue that because the world has become far more interconnected (and multiliterate) the opportunities for students to exercise a critical perspective, strengthen collaborative skills, and exhibit technological savvy have grown (NCTE, 2009). Avilla and Moore (2012), for example, note “digital literacies provide opportunities to enact critical literacy in unique ways” (p. 31). Likewise, Hillary Janks (2012) suggests that, while on the one hand, within these new media contexts, dominant Discourses continue to position us in powerful ways, on the other, these same media hold the potential for speaking back to such Discourses.

In sum, the problem that this dissertation research study sought to address is twofold. One, it involves the nature of specific student Critical Literacy practices as they get enacted in the classroom. Secondly, the problem also involves attending to Mr. Shaw’s attempts at fostering these Critical Literacy practices. Although previous research in this area has begun to address this problem, there is a need for additional research that explores the degree to which teachers’ instructional practices foster specific student Critical Literacy practices over an extended period of time. Ultimately, such research holds the potential for contributing to what educators know about supporting

students as they negotiate the various positionings they encounter in their day-to-day interactions. Given that the contexts for student interactions continue to expand, adding to such understandings is particularly important (Janks, 2010).

In exploring both problems I employed an interdisciplinary framework that draws on Critical Pedagogy (Freire 1973; Giroux, 2011) and New Literacies perspectives (New London Group, 1996; Street, 2003) to assist in defining Critical Literacy (Lewison et al., 2002; Luke, 2012) as a central component of this framework. Drawing on a New Literacies perspective assisted in operationalizing literacy in a broad and ideological sense, especially as students engaged in both traditional and new media literacy practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Moje, 2009). Likewise, drawing on Critical Pedagogy informed my understanding of not just how Mr. Shaw's pedagogical decisions served to foster student critical perspective-taking, but also how the students engaged in specific Critical Literacy practices. It should be noted that a personal motivation for this aspect of my dissertation study derives from my experiences as a public school teacher for 16 years who sought to foster the degree to which my own students engaged in specific Critical Literacy practices. As such, this dissertation study explores these problems by asking the following questions:

1. In what way(s) does a high school teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in his Tenth and Eleventh Grade English classes?
2. In what way(s) do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices?

Definitions of Significant Terminology

Analysis/Interrogation of Multiple Perspectives—this Critical Literacy component involves examining how the world may be perceived by those who hold contradictory perspectives, and may include, among other things, writing counternarratives to dominant Discourses.

Critical Educator—a teacher who employs a dialogic method of instruction in order to (re)balance existing power relations within a classroom (Freire, 1973). This kind of teacher concerns her/himself not only with building skills-based knowledge but also with facilitating student empowerment.

Critical Literacy—as a sociocultural theory it emphasizes the ways text, ideology, and discourse function within local and societal relations; as a practice it involves disrupting the commonplace, analyzing/interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action and promoting social justice.

Critical Literacy Practices—involve putting Critical Literacy into practice by engaging in actions that examine the nature of knowledge, understanding, and being as they are (re)produced through texts and social relations.

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

Disruption of the Commonplace—This Critical Literacy component involves posing problems associated with systems of meaning, which may result in asking such questions as: whose culture stands as common sense and whose does not?

Focusing on Socio-political Issues—As a Critical Literacy component, these actions include examining the relationship between the local and societal in ways that may challenge the status quo of unequal power relations.

New Literacies—a theoretical approach that conceptualizes literacy as an alternative way of thinking about reading and writing as a social practice rather than a traditional psycholinguistic notion of decoding and encoding printed texts.

Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice—one of four Critical Literacy components, it involves reflecting and acting on the world by examining how language and other sign systems might be used to maintain unequal power relations.

Overview of the Dissertation

The goal of this study was to explore how students engage in Critical Literacy practices and how their teacher attempts to foster those practices. This dissertation includes seven chapters and appendices. In chapter one I provide a background on key concerns facing a critical educator whose pedagogical focus is the exploration of social justice issues, the rationale for the study, a statement of the problem, the research questions, and the definitions of key terms.

In Chapter II, I draw on three theories to construct an interdisciplinary framework that contextualizes and, thus, guides the research. Specifically, I describe how Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, and New Literacies might be used as an interdisciplinary framework to explore the ways critical literacy learning takes place in two classrooms and how a teacher attempts to foster such learning.

In Chapter III, I review relevant past research focusing on secondary students' Critical Literacy practices. Specifically, I review what past research tells us about student Critical Literacy, the ways (if any) teachers foster those practices, and what do we *not* already know about student Critical Literacy practices. In doing so, I identify a gap in past research—suggesting a need for studies that address the two research questions I posed in the Introduction.

In Chapter IV, I present the qualitative research methodology for the study. First I describe the research site and rationale for its selection. Next, I describe the nested and intrinsic case study design as it pertains to the selection of the teacher, student participant subsample, and individual case studies. Then, I describe the methods of data collection, including a description of, and rationale for, collecting each source of data as well as the organizational and emergent coding scheme employed across three phases of analysis. Next, I address issues associated with credibility, crystallization, multivocality, and the limitations associated with generalizability and dependability. Finally, I discuss critical reflexivity, which includes the researcher's ideological biases, the structural and historical forces that contextualize the study, and the analytical processes of the study itself.

In Chapter V, I explore the first research question: In what way(s) does a high school teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in his Tenth and Eleventh Grade English classes? In highlighting the voices of the participants I describe the multiple resources on which the teacher draws to engage students in critical perspective-taking. The purpose of this chapter is to: (a) establish the teacher participant's personal Critical Pedagogy and

New Literacies learning perspective; (b) present how he fostered student critical conversations and critical text production; and (c) discuss how fostering such practices aligned with specific Critical Literacy components. The four components to which the practices aligned include: (a) disrupting the commonplace; (b) analyzing multiple perspectives; (c) focusing on socio-political issues; and (d) taking action and promoting social justice.

In Chapter VI, I explore the second research question: in what way(s) do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices? The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the voices of the students in each class as they draw on multiple resources to engage in literacy practices that align with each of the four Critical Literacy components described in the previous chapter. In particular, I first present an overview of the critical nature of student critical conversations and critical text production. Then, in order to highlight the unique ways individual students might take up such critical perspectives, I focus on two specific students (one sophomore and one junior) as intrinsic cases. Throughout the chapter I integrate a discussion of the degree to which student literacy practices align with specific Critical Literacy components.

To conclude, in Chapter VII, I provide a discussion of the contribution this study makes to existing research and theory on Critical Literacy practices. Then, I discuss the limitations in terms of practice and theory. Finally, I conclude with implications for future research and classroom practice.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As stated in the introduction, in order to make sense of Critical Literacy, this research study employed an interdisciplinary framework. Doing so helped explain the critical nature of student interaction with and through the texts students encounter in their daily lives (Lewison et al., 2002). Given that youth interact with a variety of both traditional and new media texts on a daily basis, and given that no text is ideologically neutral (Luke, 2004; Street, 2003), it is important for educators to explore not just the nature of youths' textual interactions but also the critical meanings they make from those interactions (Freire, 1973; Janks, 2000). Additionally, because this research study explored what youth specifically do with and through both traditional and new media texts, a New Literacies perspective served to inform the nature of their textual interactions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Moje, 2009). In Mr. Shaw's classroom, for example, it was common for any given interaction to include references to, and use of, popular culture texts (e.g., such as song lyrics, television shows, web advertisements), in addition to, or in conjunction with, traditional texts such as poems, plays, and novels. Furthermore, because Mr. Shaw drew on a Freirian-influenced (1973) personal pedagogy to guide his teaching practices, a Critical Pedagogy perspective contributed to understanding how he fostered student Critical Literacy practices.

What is Critical Literacy?

In a 2012 issue of *Theory into Practice*, Allan Luke suggested that Critical Literacy emphasizes “a focus on ideology critique and cultural analysis, . . . a commitment to inclusion, and an engagement with the significance of text, ideology, and discourse in the construction of social and material relations, everyday cultural and political life” (p. 6). Drawing on this sociocultural understanding of texts and the systems of meaning they (re)produce, the concept of literacy is operationalized in this dissertation study as referring to social practices that involve institutional and personal relations occurring within cultural and historical contexts (Janks, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Lewison et al., 2002; Shor, 1999; Street 1984). While consistent with Luke’s broad conception of Critical Literacy, this research study draws more closely on two specific works to further clarify what exactly constitutes a Critical Literacy practice. Published in 2002, one of those works asked, “What is Critical Literacy?” (p. 382). In it Lewison et al. explored the teaching practices of educators who were at the beginning of their careers. In reviewing existing research to that point, the authors noted that Critical Literacy could be organized into four specific components: *disruption of the commonplace*; *analysis of multiple* (and, at times, contradictory) *perspectives*; *a focus on socio-political issues*; and *taking action and promoting social justice*. In exploring “what Critical Literacy look[s] like in [beginner and novice teacher] classrooms” (p. 382), the authors found that the degree to which an early career teacher implemented a Critical Literacy pedagogy could be understood by using these four components. Since that time, studies (Avila & Moore, 2012; Howard-Bender & Mulcahy, 2007; Huang, 2011; Johnson

& Vasudevan, 2012; McLaughlin & Devoogd, 2004) have variously drawn on these four components to make sense out of classroom practices that employ a Critical Literacy framework. In fact, in their 2013 book, *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Teachers*, Vasquez, Tate, and Harste updated each of these components to include a wider range of classroom practices, especially as they occur in digital contexts. Vasquez et al. argued that previous research has not addressed the relationship between educators' "expectations for our own literate lives and our expectations for our students as literacy learners" (p. xiii). Thus, one purpose of their book was to aid both pre-service and in-service teachers in understanding Critical Literacy.

While the works of Lewison et al. (2002) and Vasquez et al. (2013) have placed their emphases on the degree to which teaching practices align with these four Critical Literacy components, in this dissertation study I draw on these same components to extend that focus. In particular, this study draws on these four Critical Literacy components to explore the relationship between what teachers do to foster student critical perspective-taking and how students variously take up such critical perspectives. For example, while Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations, within any given conversation, certain students *disrupted the commonplace*, or *interrogating multiple viewpoints*. In drawing on these four components, then, the concept of Critical Literacy from which this study draws, posits it as a theoretical perspective that can be put into practice by teachers to shape the ways they and their students approach with a critical stance the reading (and writing) of texts and contexts (Luke, 2012; Shor, 1999). As such, Lewison et al. (2002)

and Vasquez et al. (2013) describe four components that frame Critical Literacy as both a theory and practice (see Appendix A for descriptors).

Disruption of the Commonplace

As Luke argues, at its heart, Critical Literacy involves teaching and facilitating the critique of ideologies that exist within local and societal contexts. Simultaneously, it focuses on a cultural analysis, especially in terms of cultural differences, in order to disrupt the forces that marginalize and/or exclude members of non-dominant Discourse communities. In Critical Literacy classrooms, teachers and students may ask such questions as: whose culture gets defined as commonsense? This kind of focus might include on the one hand, disrupting dominant Discourse systems of meaning and, on the other, critiquing the Discourse to which one belongs. Thus, it emphasizes “unpacking social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9). Teachers and students who engage in literacy practices that align with this component, for example, participate in activities that uncover the subtle systems of meaning that permeate the popular culture texts with which we interact on a day-to-day basis. Because such social practices, according to Janks (2010), are often hegemonic, fostering student critical awareness is particularly important. This is because hegemony in its many forms functions insidiously. In other words, it works to maintain the status quo of unequal power relations in subtle ways (Gramsci, 2000).

In the case of teachers who draw on Critical Literacy teaching practices, *disrupting the commonplace* involves working with students to recognize/analyze the social practices that construct and maintain inequities associated, for example, with race,

ethnicity, gender, and class. Thus, teachers who employ a Critical Literacy perspective toward practice often seek to establish democratic classrooms that take on a dialogic structure. Ultimately, in such classrooms, the traditional binary distinctions between students and between students and teachers are disrupted (Freire, 1973; Luke, 2012). Thus, a Critical Literacy perspective takes both an active and reflective stance toward literacy learning in that it focuses on understanding and critiquing existing social structures as they function within varying contexts.

Analyzing/Interrogating Multiple and Contradictory Perspectives

Reading the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) in this way, for a high school student, might entail exploring how the rules and procedures associated with “doing school” are interpreted differently by others. Critical Literacy practices, then, also involve reading the world from an inclusive perspective. Thus, this Critical Literacy component centers on negotiating one’s own views in relation to the views of others (Vasquez et al., 2013). What this means, according to Lewison et al. (2002), is that teachers and students may ask such questions as, “whose voices are heard and whose are missing?” In doing so, they focus on identifying and critiquing social practices that marginalize some while privileging others. They may even engage in constructing their own counternarratives (Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996).

Teachers who foster Critical Literacy practices that align with this component engage students in open-ended inquiries. Such inquiries, according to Vasquez et al. (2013), might include analyzing multiple texts that feature different perspectives toward an overall concept or topic. The authors suggest that these “text sets” (Leland et al.,

1999) often include multimodal texts. In these situations, students may be asked to consider how various texts can be read from, or against, certain perspectives and what meanings might be drawn from doing so. This is an important point to make, because multimodal text sets often provide teachers with tools to foster the multiliteracies present in the contemporary classroom (Kress, 2010). In using multimodal text sets, critical educators (Morrell, 2003; Vasquez et al., 2013) may encourage all students to participate in critical conversations that analyze “contradictory and competing points of view” (Janks, 2010, p. 63).

According to the New London Group (1996), this is particularly important for contemporary literacy learning classrooms. Such a pedagogy, they argue, must take into account the ever-increasing diverse nature of our student populations. To that point, they ask, “what is appropriate for all in the context of the ever more critical factors of local diversity and global connectedness” (p. 62)? These two points, that modes of communication are rapidly multiplying, and such multimodalities represent the ever-increasing importance “of cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 63) suggest that today’s literacy pedagogy must be a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

Focusing on Socio-political Issues

According to Vasquez et al. (2013), when educators help students make “inferences and connections between things that are not immediately obvious” (p. 13), they provide opportunities for students to consider the relationship between what is local and what is societal. Thus, unlike the other two Critical Literacy components (*disruption of the commonplace; analysis of multiple viewpoints*), this particular component

specifically emphasizes the ways larger societal issues connect to students' everyday experiences. Janks (2010) notes that for teachers to foster such literacy practices associated with this Critical Literacy component, it is important to make the distinction between politics with a capital P and politics with a little p. Big P politics involve those concerns that center on governments and social unrest, for example. Little p politics refer to those personal "micro-politics of everyday life" (p. 188).

For example, a high school English teacher and her students may examine the power relations within (so-called) traditional academic texts such as Shakespeare's *Othello* (Johnson & Ciancio, 2003) and how these power relations function in both local and societal contexts. Such a teacher may also provide opportunities for students to critique these same power structures appearing in the day-to-day popular culture texts (e.g., infomercial; song lyrics; television shows) with which they interact (Alvermann, 2008; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Jackson, 2011), texts that serve to privilege some perspectives (or Discourses) over others. For example, Huang (2011) demonstrated how this critique might be accomplished within a class of university students who used a Critical Literacy lens to deconstruct the power structures at work in both academic and popular texts.

In a similar view, Janks (2012) provided an example of the ways one might deconstruct power structures reproduced through new media texts. Specifically, she demonstrated how one might examine the inherent messages found in a provocative image of an Afghan woman (Bibi Aisha) that appeared on a *Time* magazine cover. The photograph featured Aisha's face, which had been mutilated as punishment for running

away from her abusive husband. As Janks pointed out, Aisha is looking directly at the camera and, thus, directly at the viewer. Such an image, Janks argued, calls to mind certain Critical Literacy questions: How much control does anyone have over how their texts are re-mashed, re-designed, re-mixed; should critique be about the author's position or about the effects of the text in different contexts of production and reception; and what are the ethical considerations of this kind of photography? Janks concluded, "in the world in which I live, critical engagement[s] continue to suggest the importance of an education in Critical Literacy, and indeed critique" (p. 159).

Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice

A Critical Literacy approach to teaching not only emphasizes the critique of existing ideologies as they get reproduced through texts and Discourses, in taking an inclusive stance it places emphasis on the ways social and material relations get constructed. As a result, as critical educators and their students engage in social action, they may seek a broader audience outside the classroom. Such a stance involves Freire's (1973) notion of praxis, or reflection on (and action in response to) problems associated with such things as social inequities (Lewison et al., 2002). Teachers may do this by providing opportunities for students to position themselves as social activists who reflect on the degree to which their own and others' actions maintain the status quo and to consider future actions that may challenge such social practices.

To fully engage in promoting social justice, however, critical educators also provide opportunities for students to "compose their own narratives, counter-narratives, letters, essays, reports, [and] poems . . ." (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 17). This notion,

according to the authors, is the essence of critical reflexivity. In other words, teachers who foster Critical Literacy practices that align with *taking action and promoting social justice* provide opportunities for students to reflect and act on others' as well as their own role in maintaining or challenging the status quo of unequal power relations (Morrell, 2002). According to Vasquez et al. (2013), this particular component, then, is "an attempt to move the school curriculum to the community; to make it relevant to the lives of the students we teach" (p. 15). In this sense, full alignment with this component amounts to more than just talking about, or reflecting on, past actions or the actions of others, it involves broadening one's audience to involve those who are outside the confines of the classroom. While previous research (Lewison et al., 2002) has demonstrated that this is difficult to fully foster, more current research (Avila & Moore, 2012; Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010) has shown that providing opportunities for students to use digital/online tools may foster certain literacy practices that fully align with this Critical Literacy component. Such practices might include, for example, creating weblogs or digital videos that call specific audiences to action.

What are the Historical Foundations of Critical Literacy?

The foundations of Critical Literacy are varied. According to Luke (2012), depending on one's perspective, a Critical Literacy approach to classroom instruction may derive from "feminist, postcolonial, poststructuralist, and critical race theory; critical linguistics and cultural studies; and, indeed, rhetorical and cognitive models" (p. 5). Each of these perspectives have served to broaden the critical pedagogic perspective to include issues of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation, thereby placing special

emphasis on voice (Luke & Dooley, 2011). The Critical Literacy framework employed here draws on this notion of Critical Pedagogy as focusing on the “representation of cultures, histories, and identities” (Luke & Dooley, 2011, p. 7) through a reading of the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Critical Pedagogy

Such an expanded notion of Critical Pedagogy as the one noted here, helped inform my understanding of the relations between Mr. Shaw and the students. Drawing on Critical Pedagogy, especially its notion of praxis, to inform a Critical Literacy perspective, thus, helped to guide the exploration of both my research questions. Specifically, it helped explore the ways in which Mr. Shaw implemented his personal (dialogic) approach to fostering specific Critical Literacy practices within his classroom.

Critical Pedagogy finds its roots in Critical Theory, especially as it connects to the Frankfurt School, which emphasized the ways in which culture and media serve to maintain and (re)produce unequal power structures through hegemonic processes. This core tenet of Critical Theory, the ideology critique, looks to expose how these processes relate to gender, race, and class (Brookfield, 2005; Giroux, 2000). Critical Pedagogy, then, centers on the degree to which these processes exist within the context of institutions, communities, and classrooms. From this perspective, a central concern of the critical educator is to expose, critique, and challenge the ways in which the hegemonic processes of traditional schooling and society at large function in the lives of students (Giroux, 2000).

Paulo Freire (1973) noted that the traditional view of schooling positions students as empty vessels into which teachers fill whatever knowledge the educational system deems appropriate. According to Freire, this kind of teaching is “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (Freire, 1973, p. 58). Freire termed this a banking model of education that involves traditional teaching methods such as lecture, rote memorization, and repetition. Furthermore, the banking model reflects and reproduces the kinds of oppressive power structures found in society. It is a system that views students as passive, compliant, and incapable of independent thought and critique.

To counter this traditional mode of teaching, Freire argued that both teachers and students should practice *conscientization*, or thinking (and acting) in ways that critique and challenge the banking model of education. *Conscientization* involves fostering the ability to develop theories and relations and to reflect on those relations and theories. It is a reflexive and active position, or praxis, that involves problem-posing (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 2000). Instead of the banking model of instruction, then, the teacher should employ a dialogic method, one that privileges dialogue between students and teacher - one that (re)balances power (Freire, 1973). The kind of teacher who engages in these practices, or critical educator (Morrell, 2003; Vasquez et al., 2013), concerns her/himself not only with building skills-based knowledge but also with facilitating student empowerment. In this dissertation study, for example, one particular way Mr. Shaw did this was by providing opportunities for students to draw on personal experience and background knowledge. Doing so fostered participation in conversations during which

students took up a critical stance toward local and/or societal forces that position them, or others, in marginalizing ways. It should be noted that this does not mean, however, the teacher relinquishes all power to students. On the contrary, while teachers might, for example, position themselves as co-learners, it also means they should “assert authority in the service of creating a participatory and democratic classroom” (Giroux, 2000, p. 150). Thus, the teacher functions as authoritative rather than authoritarian educator (Juzwik, 2006), one whose practice aims for democratic forms of schooling (Giroux, 2000).

The notion of democracy called for here is taken in the Deweyan sense. That is, it calls for citizens to take a reflexive posture that emphasizes participation within social relations (Dewey, 2008; Shor, 1999). Thus, it ultimately facilitates a kind freedom that scholars like Maxine Greene advocate, one that distinguishes between self-dependence, or “absence of interference” (1988, p. 7), and freedom as relationship—as the situatedness of social beings. This conception of freedom coincides with an understanding of identity as fluid, socially constructed and, thus, context specific. Greene claims that if one “separates oneself as ‘subject’ from an independent existent ‘object,’ then one loses the ability to become the “‘author’ of one’s world” (p. 22). It denies the possibility of personal agency. In sum, then, Critical Pedagogy, as is understood here, involves focusing on the ways students might empower themselves through *conscientization* (Freire, 1973), in other words, by taking a critical participatory posture as a member of a socially connected democratic society (Giroux, 2000; Shor, 1999).

Taking a critical participatory posture is one way Critical Pedagogy contributes to defining Critical Literacy. Specifically, a stance of this kind may be enacted through Critical Literacy practices. Behrman (2006) noted that these practices include “reading from a resistant perspective . . . producing counter-texts . . . and taking social action” (p. 482), all of which involve, to one degree or another, a critical participatory posture. For example, when students read a text from a resistant perspective, they may question the author’s stance and the ways s/he positions the reader (Xu, 2007). They may also question/challenge the way dominant Discourses position, or marginalize, certain groups of people.

Critical Pedagogy’s connection to Critical Literacy’s can also be found in the concept of praxis. For example, Janks (2012) notes that, in addition to looking backwards to what has been, Critical Literacy also involves looking forward toward redesign and, thus, toward action. This view of the critical brings to mind the notion of reflection on, and action toward, the problems posed in a critical educator’s classroom (Giroux, 2011). Framing Critical Literacy as deconstruction that leads to redesign indicates its importance as an essential stance toward, and understanding of, literacy as socially constructed and, thus, ideological (Luke, 2004). Drawing on Critical Pedagogy, in the end, helped highlight how Mr. Shaw fostered Critical Literacy practices within his classroom, especially those that challenged students to not only reflect, but to also act, on the word and the world (Freire, 1973).

Criticisms of Critical Literacy

Burnett and Merchant (2011) summarize two potential problem areas associated with Critical Literacy. One focus is on the notion that a critical perspective toward popular culture may result in challenging the pleasure audiences derive from interacting with various media. Critical Media scholars (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Gainer, 2007) warn against such colonization of the popular. They note that encouraging so-called *correct* readings of popular media texts may, for example, result in students resisting the very critical perspective their teachers advocate. Alvermann et al. (1999) suggest that students may do this in order to preserve the enjoyment derived from interaction with these texts.

A second problem associated with audience is the notion of the potential for Critical Literacy to become institutionalized (Avila & Moore, 2012). Burnett and Merchant (2011) note that institutionalization of critique involves favoring certain perspectives toward, and certain readings of, particular texts. This approach, as the authors suggest, assumes a passive audience, one whose personal interactions with texts lack criticality. Such a perspective has the potential for over-simplifying the complex relations between audiences and the texts they consume, especially if the result is positioning those audiences as passive dupes. In response to such dangers, certain scholars argue for balancing critique with pleasure (Gainer, 2007; Kellner & Share, 2007). Toward that end, existing research (Black, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Kellner & Share, 2007) advocates classroom applications that foster students' enactment

of critical stances *toward* texts while acknowledging the pleasure derived from alternative interpretations of these texts.

However, as literacy practices have taken a digital turn toward new understandings of authorship and distribution of knowledge, Burnett and Merchant (2011) call for a next step focused on fostering the enactment of those critical stances, not only *toward* texts, but also *through* them. The authors suggest that focusing one's critique solely on a static conception of text is limited. Text producers and consumers are not just critically attuned to digital media, for example, they also exercise a critical perspective through these media toward both local and global audiences. Thus, Burnett and Merchant claim, "a practice focused model based on the interplay of diverse purposes, contexts and resources is a more useful analytical tool" (2011, p. 54).

In a similar vein, Luke and Dooley (2011) note that an early criticism of critical perspectives in education was that they did not address student interaction with a broad variety of text genres. However, current Critical Literacy conceptions of text are broadly conceived to include a wide array of genres, including "print and multimodal, paper-based and digital—and their codes and discourses as human technologies for representing and reshaping possible worlds" (p. 1). This broadened view has ventured not only into the digital, but also to consider such everyday texts as billboards, mailings, television, menus, clothing, and even the body (and performance) as semiotic representations (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012; Kress, 2010) and as sites for Critical Literacy practices. Through such practices, one begins to see how Critical and New Literacies converge. For example, Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) argue from a perspective that conceives of

Critical Literacy as performance. They claim that this notion of the body as a performed text derives from social norms associated with “gender, race, sexuality, class, age, and ability” (p. 35). Such a broadened conception of both text and critical perspective-taking begins to suggest the need for educators and researchers to focus not just on academic texts and the practices associated with their consumption and analysis but also the everyday literacy practices associated with texts traditionally positioned outside the confines of the classroom. Johnson and Vasudevan argue, “It is incumbent upon teachers to view students as ‘critically literate in a range of modes and genres’” (p. 40).

New Literacy Studies

As indicated above, one way to address the criticism of Critical Literacy is to emphasize the multiple literacy practices with which students engage as well as the critical nature of those practices. Consistent with this critical perspective, New Literacies traditionally has been framed in relation to conceptualizing literacy as an alternative way of thinking about reading and writing as a social practice rather than as the traditional psycholinguistic notion of decoding and encoding printed texts. Street (2005) argues that this model is an ideological rather than autonomous one. An ideological view of literacy is anchored in “a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others” (p. 78), rather than being something received fully intact and serving no particular ideological interest. As Street notes, this stance suggests that because classroom interactions between teachers and students are inherently social, the kinds of literacy learning that occur within the school setting are affected by the relationships between participants; they are ideological.

Literacy Practices

When viewing literacy in this broadly conceived and ideological way, it is important to operationalize its attendant practices. Street (2003) suggests that a literacy practices focus frames reading and writing in broad cultural terms. Barton and Hamilton (2000) note that literacy practices can be organized into domains that include specific events; because literacy practices tend to be global, events tend to contextualize them. Thus, literacy practices and their localized events are associated with nearly any aspect of a given culture.

Taking their cue from Heath, who defines literacy events as “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes” (1982, p. 93), Barton and Hamilton (2000) suggest that literacy events are specific observable episodes that emerge from literacy practices. In other words, they are a kind of context-specific embodiment of a literacy practice. Because literacy practices are “inferred” (p. 18) from events, they include resources that are not immediately visible. Thus, they include attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. For example, a literacy practice might include those associated with families, with schools, or with churches. There are even literacy practices associated with sports and rock n’ roll music.

Understanding literacy in this way helps clarify not only an operationalized definition of literacy practices, it also helps clarify a rationale for exploring the ways in which students’ literacy practices get enacted. In other words, since literacy practices focus on what we do with language in our daily lives, the concept can help researchers

understand the various things students do with reading and writing. As such, a New Literacies perspective on literacy and literacy practices focuses on more than just the *where*, the *when*, and the *who*; it also involves the *how* and the *why* (Burnett & Merchant 2011; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009).

Multimodalities

Another term that is often associated with New Literacies, and was most prominently defined by The New London Group (1996), is multimodality. In a seminal piece, the group suggested that since multiplicity rather than homogeneity is the norm in today's schools, teachers need to "recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities . . . students bring to learning" (p. 72). In arguing this point, the group noted that we should think of literacy learning in terms of multiliteracies, a concept they use to describe the changing nature of literacy toward an explosion of modes of communication within an ever-diversifying world, especially in terms of culture and language. They argued that a new pedagogical framework should be implemented in our schools. This framework included six elements of design: linguistic, audio, spatial, gestural, visual, and (altogether) multimodal. Implementing pedagogies geared toward this multimodal design framework, the group argued, would "create access to the evolving language of work, power, and community" (p. 252).

This brief discussion of New Literacies, especially as it relates to student literacy practices, is important in the sense that much of what scholars term *new literacies* is getting more and more attention in our schools, incorporating multimodal elements, and include attention to the critical aspects of literacy practices. Thus, in fully understanding

the concept of New Literacies, one must also understand the concepts of multiliteracies and multimodality as originally conceived by The New London Group (1996).

The *New* in New Literacies

Thinking about a broadened notion of literacy, of literacy practices, and of multimodality begins to get at what is meant by framing new literacies as *new*. New Literacy scholars refer to literacy in both the technological and the relational sense, as involving both new media and “different kinds of social and cultural relations” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009, p. 25). Thus, literacy as convergent and/or competing practices contributes to an understanding of learning as a process by which we use (semiotic, discursive) tools to make meaning within varying contexts. Literacy learning is, thus, not only a change in behavior or understanding, it is also a change in understanding and being (Gee, 2000; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001; Wortham, 2006).

In analyzing literacy and literacy practices in a contextual, social way it is important to conceptualize how these terms get organized. Gee suggests that a useful concept for organizing literacy is what he notes as “Big D” Discourse, which he defines simply as “language plus ‘other stuff’” (2005, p. 26). In digging deeper for a more comprehensive definition, Gee notes that a “Discourse is a way of being together in the world for humans . . . and for non-human things, as well, such that coordinations of elements, and elements themselves, take on recognizable identities.” Thus, as Lankshear and Knobel (2009) suggest, Discourses come in many forms, from schools to physicians to rock n’ roll, and so on. Framing New Literacies, then, as a way to explore various

Discourses as they get reproduced through such everyday sign systems as popular music, television shows, or internet websites begins to suggest how New Literacies might contribute to an interdisciplinary framework that gets used to explore student Critical Literacy practices.

Connections to Critical Literacy

A New Literacies perspective on literacy that involves new media, multimodalities, a broadened notion of what constitutes literacy itself, and new social identities, means that “consumers . . . become critics, reviewers or commentators” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009, p. 36). It is at this juncture, where students exercise a critical stance toward the myriad of texts they encounter on a daily basis, that Critical and New Literacy Studies begin to converge (Morrell, 2011). Morrell argues this point by advocating a Critical New Literacy approach to English education. He notes, in particular, that this pedagogical model may result in increased success for youth (2005; 2011).

Drawing on New Literacies to frame my dissertation research study helped to fully illuminate the Critical Literacy practices with which Mr. Shaw’s students engaged. In other words, using New Literacies as part of an interdisciplinary approach helped to contextualize Critical Literacy practices as they got extended into student interactions with and through new media texts (Moje, 2009).

Thus, this interdisciplinary framework helped fill a gap in existing research by broadly framing literacy to include what students do with and through both traditional and non-traditional texts. Because student literacy practices continue to expand into new

contexts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Avila & Pandya, 2014), such a framework may also expand to explore how critical perspective-taking might get enacted in new spaces. However, this framework filled an additional gap in existing research by exploring how a teacher might draw on his literacy learning perspective in attempting to foster student Critical Literacy practices. In particular, drawing on a Critical Pedagogy perspective to inform this interdisciplinary framework helped articulate how Mr. Shaw implemented Freire's (1973) notion of the dialogic classroom to position students as co-learners who read (critically) the word and the world. In the end, such a framework contributes to Critical Literacy research in that it highlights that intersection between how a teacher opens spaces for critical perspective-taking and how the students' variously enter them.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An interdisciplinary approach also helped to contextualize my review of literature. Specifically, it helped inform prior understandings of student Critical Literacy practices, especially as those practices have ventured into new media contexts. Berhman's 2006 review of Critical Literacy research, for example, focuses on previous studies set primarily within the context of upper elementary or secondary Language Arts classrooms. In that review, the author organized the studies according to student activities or the tasks given to them by their teachers. Of the six themes he found, five focused on student Critical Literacy practices (reading supplementary texts; reading multiple texts; reading from a resistant perspective; producing counter-texts; conducting student-choice research projects). Furthermore, of the five areas, three focused on critical reading while two focused on critical text production. The fact that nearly all of the studies focused on these five areas suggests that an over-arching theme found in the review centered on Critical Literacy practices, which he defined as activities that serve to enhance a reader's understanding of the constructed nature of texts (Luke & Freebody, 1997, as cited in Behrman, 2006).

However, since the publication of these 24 studies, research in the area of Critical Literacy has continued to expand, especially as the field has come to include practices related to the digital turn (Mills, 2010) taken by New Literacy Studies. For example, in

her review, Mills noted that a number of studies (e.g., Domico, 2006; Sanford & Madill, 2007) have “yielded important findings about power relations and new digital practices across all levels of education” (2010, p. 260). Since then, Avila and Pandya (2013) have extended the research focus of Mills’ review to highlight studies that draw on a critical perspective within digital contexts.

Given that 68% of teens who go online do so in part to access current events and politics (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010), Mills’s findings seem all the more relevant. As such, an impetus for this dissertation study’s review is to build on Behrman’s 2006 study in two areas of focus: the nature of student Critical Literacy practices; and the things teachers do to foster those practices. In reviewing the studies, I focused on findings that featured student Critical Literacy practices that include both traditional and new media texts. This emphasis not only served to extend the Behrman study, it also informed the research questions that drove my study. As such, I asked: (a) what do we already know about student Critical Literacy practices; (b) in what ways (if any) do teachers foster those practices; and (c) what do we *not* already know about student Critical Literacy practices?

Included here are studies published within the last 10 years (2003-2013) that are directly related to Critical Literacy practices. In reviewing these studies, I included representative research from the final two years of Behrman’s (2006) range of review (Bean & Moni, 2003; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Mclaughlin & Devoogd, 2004) as well as more recent studies that might capture the digital turn in both Critical and New Literacy studies. Luke (2012) argues that the reasons for combining Critical and New

Literacy studies are twofold: while New Literacies have the capacity for expanding critique of certain power relations, simply interacting within a digital environment does not count as a Critical Literacy practice. In other words, New Literacies broadens Critical Literacies while Critical Literacies focuses News Literacies.

Taking this into consideration, I searched the ERIC and Education Index databases using the following criteria. Each study must: (a) have been peer reviewed; (b) have featured middle school or high school students; (c) have included Critical Literacy as a guiding theoretical framework (either solely or in conjunction with another framework); (d) have been published within the last ten years (2003 to 2013); and (e) have included some aspect of student literacy practices. It should be noted that combining the terms *Critical Literacy* and *New Literacy (Studies)* yielded only one result. As such, in searching for studies that incorporated elements of both perspectives I searched for *Critical Literacy* in combination with the term *literacy practices*.

Once I obtained the results for a given search, I read each of the studies in order to determine if Critical Literacy was, in fact, used as a central guiding framework and if the study featured middle or high school students and their literacy practices. Applying these criteria to the search yielded 14 representative peer-reviewed Critical Literacy studies that emphasized student literacy practices. Finally, for each of the 14 studies, I applied the questions I noted above. In doing so, I found that what we already know about student Critical Literacy practices is: (a) the kinds of Critical Literacy practices with which students engage include disrupting the commonplace, focusing/acting on sociopolitical issues, examining multiple perspectives, and developing an overall critical

consciousness (Avila & Moore, 2012; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Jackson, 2011; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Lopez, 2011; Love & Simpson, 2005; Spector & Jones, 2003); (b) student Critical Literacy practices may compliment (and extend) standard curricula (Avila & Moore, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Love & Simpson, 2005); and (c) popular culture texts may serve as a bridge to academic and critical literacies (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Lesley, 2008; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003).

In asking what teachers do to foster these Critical Literacy practices, I found that, while many of the studies did not report on this, some noted that teachers: (a) used a variety of texts to problematize social and historical structures; (b) engaged multimodalities by asking students to create their own texts; and (c) reframed the teacher-student relationship as a dialogic one (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Jackson, 2011; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Lopez, 2011; Spector & Jones, 2003).

Finally, in asking what we do not already know about student Critical Literacy practices I found that exploring this question helps to provide a rationale for both of the research questions to which my study adheres. Specifically, I discovered that my first research question (*In what ways does a teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in his high school tenth and eleventh grade English classes?*) is an important one to ask, especially given the calls for university teacher education programs to include Critical Literacy and Critical Pedagogy perspectives in preparing their pre-service teachers (Bean & Moni, 2003; Morrell, 2011). In reviewing the previously published research, I found that few studies have explored this question in serious detail. In asking my first research question, then, I documented Mr. Shaw's Critical Pedagogic strategies, whether learned

in his university course of study or by some other means, and how those strategies fostered student Critical Literacy practices.

I also discovered that my second research question (*In what ways do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices?*) has not been adequately explored by previous studies. In particular, few studies have examined exactly how students engage in specific Critical Literacy practices (Janks, 2010), especially those that extend over the course of an entire semester of study. This is despite calls from Critical and New Literacies scholars for studies that explore not just critical reading, but for those that also involve the production of critical texts (Janks, 2012; Mills, 2010; Morrell, 2003). As noted in the introduction to this dissertation study, this is important because, as the world has become more interconnected and collaborative (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009), the opportunities for students to reflect (and act on) a critical perspective have grown (NCTE, 2009). Exploring these two research questions served to highlight student voices as they engaged in critical conversations and critical text production. It also served to inform current understandings of what teachers do to foster such critical perspective-taking.

Classroom Critical Literacy Practices Vary

The studies included here indicate that the kinds of Critical Literacy practices with which students engage while in their English Language Arts classrooms are various and feature interaction with popular culture as well as more traditional academic texts. In a 2011 study, for example, Lopez focused on a popular culture genre – the performance poem. Situated within the context of a multicultural 12th grade Canadian classroom, the

author took an interdisciplinary approach (Critical Literacy combined with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy). Her goal was to foster student critical perspectives toward: certain forms of poetry; certain kinds of privileged knowledge; and students' own understandings of others. The participants explored multiple perspectives by which popular culture texts (spoken word poems) might be interpreted. In doing so, they were able to critique the authors' positions while also producing their own performance poems.

An interesting finding for this particular study is that the students were not only critically engaged with the texts, and the texts' creators, they were also critically engaged with each other. Based on her observations of collaborative groups, Lopez noted that students developed critical praxis; reflection on the cultural tensions within the group helped facilitate students' writing about their own personal issues via performance poetry and critical discussions. Activities such as dialoguing within the classroom made for a critical engagement that is multi-dimensional. Ultimately, through critical dialogue the students connected the context of their own personal lives to larger societal contexts.

In addition to the Lopez (2011) study, other studies indicate that when interacting with popular culture texts students engage in various Critical Literacy practices. In general, the studies suggest that these literacy practices align with such Critical Literacy components as social action, critical consciousness, and interrogation of multiple perspectives (Desai & Marsh, 2005; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Jackson, 2011). For example, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) found that, for their urban high school participants, engaging in hip-hop culture and music fostered a critical consciousness as evidenced through a variety of literacy practices such as class discussions, student-written

essays, and personally relevant research. Additionally, Jackson (2011) found that students who feel a sense of marginalization, when creating and presenting popular culture texts (infomercials), engaged in Critical Literacy practices to examine the origins and effects of specific stereotypes.

Like the Lopez study, Desai and Marsh (2005) also focused on spoken word/performance poetry, a genre that emphasizes the importance of audience, and used an interdisciplinary approach. In combining Critical Pedagogy, Critical Literacy, and Critical Race Theory as an interrelated framework they explored the ways spoken word could be used to encourage “critical consciousness, dialogue, and action” (p. 72). In using this framework they drew on Street’s (2003) notion that literacy is ideological rather than autonomous. Thus they combined a New Literacies perspective with those of a Critical Literacy perspective.

Set in a grant-funded program they termed Political Education, Art, and Critical Expression (PEACE), Desai and Marsh and 10 high school participants met after school at the participants’ Los Angeles area high school. According to the authors, with respect to poetry/writing, at least half of the participants engaged in writing outside of school (journaling, poetry) through which they expressed who they are, the struggles they experience, and the views they have toward the world.

Ultimately, according to the authors, the findings suggest a need to expand the notion of discourse to include what they call the interactive-auditory. This, they claim, is an extension of Gee’s (1996) three types of discourse (oral, written, and body). Interestingly, their argument for this new category centers in part on the idea that spoken

word “moves its audience at times to take action on a particular issue” (p. 87). The data presented in this piece, however, do not actually report on students taking action on specific issues, either through spoken word or any other medium beyond the immediate PEACE class. This is despite presenting spoken word as a kind of “praxis for social transformation” (p. 72). Regardless, Desai and Marsh argue that educators must attend to Interactive-Auditory discourses such that students may have more opportunities for Critical Literacy practices.

In sum, one thing we already know about Critical Literacy practices within the classroom is that the use of popular culture texts may foster their enactment. We also know that previous research indicates that these kinds of practices are variable. In the studies discussed here, students engaged in critical reading, critical dialogue, and critical text production (e.g., performance poem). However, the findings of other studies suggest that even without the incorporation of popular culture texts, students may still engage in Critical Literacy practices while in the secondary classroom (Avila & Moore, 2012, Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Love & Simpson, 2005). For example, Johnson and Ciancio (2003) found that, through “pos[ing] questions, mak[ing] hypotheses, and argu[ing] interpretations” (p. 41), students in an at-risk ninth grade class were able to critique the social structures presented in a novelization of Shakespeare’s *Othello*. Likewise, Spector and Jones (2007), in the intervention phase of a two-year study focused on students’ Analysis of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, found that employing a Critical Literacy approach facilitated their eighth grade participants’ “deconstruct[ion] and reconstruct[ion] of themselves and their worlds” (p. 47). Similarly, Bean and Moni (2003) found that using

specific kinds of discussion questions prompted students to engage with Critical Literacy practices while reading a Young Adult novel. For example, the authors found that questions such as: “How does the adult author construct the world of adolescence in the novel?” and “Who gets to speak and have a voice in the novel and who doesn’t?” (p. 645) encourage students to challenge specific worldviews and to read from different perspectives. As Lewison et al. (2002) note, asking such questions aligns with two Critical Literacy components - *disrupting the commonplace* and *analyzing multiple worldviews*.

Popular Culture Texts may Bridge to Academic/Critical Literacies

As noted above, Popular Culture texts, as well as those that are traditionally characterized as more academic, may foster student in-class Critical Literacy practices. However, certain Critical Literacy scholars (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Lesley, 2008) found that the use of Popular Culture texts not only served to engage students in such practices it also served to engage them in so-called academic literacy practices. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) characterize these kinds of literacies as those needed for “academic advancement, professional employment, and active citizenship” (p. 285). They noted that Hip Hop texts in particular not only fostered Critical Literacy skills, they also supported the acquisition of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. A Hip Hop text may, for example, help facilitate students’ ability to produce counternarratives, which ultimately provides a means for *analyzing multiple perspectives*, or speaking back to dominant Discourse understandings that

marginalized specific groups of people. In addition, it may also help students understand such literary concepts as tone and theme.

Other Critical Literacy scholars drew similar conclusions. For example, Lesley (2008) found that when educators provide spaces for students to explore their own marginalized positions through a variety of texts they provide “a bridge between dominant and non-dominant forms of discourse” (p. 174). In particular, although they were deemed academically “at risk” by a federally funded program, the students in Lesley’s study demonstrated an ability to connect texts to their personal lives, analyze pronoun usage, and critique an author’s position. Such data emphasized the convergence of Critical and academic Literacy skills. Johnson and Ciancio came to similar conclusions. In their 2003 study of “at risk” students, they noted that when students interacted with popular culture texts certain academic literacy skills were enhanced. For example, when the participants analyzed cover art for popular music lyrics they “thought metaphorically and interpretatively” (p. 43), especially in relation to themes that connected to their personal lives.

Students Engage in Critical Literacy Practices to Varying Degrees

However, not all of the studies reviewed here found that students engaged in Critical Literacy practices (Howard-Bender & Mulcahy, 2007; Pirbhai-Ilich, 2010). One anomaly in this group of studies lies in the findings of a 2007 study by Howard-Bender and Mulcahy. In a study that featured five “at-risk” ninth grade students, the authors found that the teens were highly engaged in lessons that facilitated emotional resonance with a novel (*Monster*) they were reading in class. However, in relation to their concern

for exploring Critical Literacy practices, they noted that the students did not fully demonstrate Critical Literacy skills within the classroom. Although the student Discussion Directors began to raise questions about why teens join gangs, for example, they did not explore the ways social structures might be related to such membership. A discussion extended toward such sociopolitical issues would have aligned with this central component of Critical Literacy (Lewison et al., 2002). The authors suggested that, because the teacher's lesson designs included student-generated questions that focused primarily on reading comprehension, student Critical Literacy practices were limited.

Pirbhai-Ilich (2010) came to similar conclusions by noting that the construction of her participant-teacher's lesson plans may have been the cause, at least in part, of the limitations of the Critical Literacy instruction. Specifically, she noted that, although the multiliteracies strategy of the teacher's instruction led to higher student engagement and improvement in academic literacy, the students did not engage in Critical Literacy practices. Interestingly, in questioning why the students did not engage in Critical Literacy practices, the author calls on Ogbu and Simon's (1998, as cited in Pirbhai-Ilich, 2010) notion that lack of participation may be (for some) in and of itself a form of resistance. She notes that if this is true, then exploring the issues surrounding power and privilege with students who rarely experience them can be problematic. In the end, she asks, how does a teacher foster Critical Literacy practices if students do not believe that they have the capacity to effect social change? Such a question resonates with each of the two research questions to which this dissertation study adheres.

Ultimately, Pirbhai-Ilich suggested that if the Critical Literacy instruction followed rather than preceded the multiliteracies instruction, the students may have engaged in such practices. To complicate things further, she added, it is possible, however, that teaching Critical Literacy practices within certain “strict” (p. 264) contexts is constraining.

Critical Literacy Practices May Compliment/Extend Standard Curricula

When examining the relationship between standards and Critical Literacy approaches to classroom instruction, the studies included here (Avila & Moore, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Love & Simpson, 2005) suggest that this relationship is a complicated one. For example, Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2005) concluded that, although teaching popular culture texts may bridge to academic literacies and Critical Literacies, one must be careful not to infringe on student enjoyment of such texts. One primary reason, as Burnett and Merchant (2011) warn, is that “inculcating particular ‘correct’ or ‘worthy’ readings” could amount to the colonization of popular culture (p. 44), which may counter teachers’ attempts at Critical Literacy instruction. Ultimately, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) note that incorporating popular culture texts into the English curriculum may serve to not only privilege students’ critical perspectives, it may also assist in addressing both national and state standards.

Avila and Moore (2012) complicate this further by noting that, whereas Critical Literacy scholars view literacy as socially constructed and, thus, ideological in nature, a standards perspective tends to frame literacy in terms of individual proficiency. The tension between these two perspectives figures heavily in their study. The study, which

features a single African American female participant enrolled in the eleventh grade, draws on Lewison et al.'s (2002) four components of Critical Literacy as well as on New Literacy/digital perspectives to address specific Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In doing so, the authors compared the CCSS to an online digital text (letter to the editor) written by their participant. Interestingly, the authors found that even though the participant was "designated as *below basic* by a state-mandated standardized assessment" (p. 28), the Critical Literacy assignment seemed to contradict this label. They noted that the text she produced (letter to the editor) met the CCSS and also demonstrated her ability to practice Critical Literacy. As such, they argue, Critical Literacies have the potential for opening up avenues for demonstrating student proficiency, avenues currently unexplored by traditional measures (Beach et al., 2012).

Ultimately, the authors noted, New Literacies (especially those associated with digital/online media) has the potential for facilitating Critical Literacies. In doing so, they quote Lankshear et al. (1996) who argue, "digital texts are creating a new locale, constantly under construction, where critical literacies can exist, and continue to develop, beyond the confines of standardization" (as cited in Avila & Moore, 2012, p. 31). In the end, the authors are careful to emphasize that although teachers have the capacity to reconcile the differences between a Critical Literacy and CCSS understanding of literacy, the CCSS themselves should not exist independent of critique. In other words, even as CCSS make room for Critical Literacy, they should be treated as texts that deserve a Critical Literacy analysis. To this point, Beach et al. (2012) argue that the CCSS are limited in their focus on "learning to critically analyze the media and Internet resources"

(p. 176). Additionally, Avlia and Moore (2012) note that future research should center on examining the ways teachers might employ a Critical Literacy perspective toward instruction focused on the CCSS. Such an instructional design may highlight how Critical Literacies have the capacity to compliment (and extend) standard curricula.

While Avila and Moore (2012) focus on national standards within the United States, Love and Simpson (2005) focus their study on Australian state standards. Their study, which included 180 adolescents between the ages of 16 and 17, combined a Critical Literacy framework with Bernstein's notion of framing. As defined by Love and Simpson, framing emphasizes the degree to which a transmitter (the person who has control over such things as selecting text, how it is sequenced, the pace of sequencing, and what criteria are used in its valuation) or the acquirer (the one to whom the text is directed) sets the curricular agenda. Love and Simpson used this concept to analyze 200 asynchronous online student discussion threads, focusing especially on "critically oriented literacy practices" (p. 450). With respect to Australian Critical Literacy instructional standards, the authors wanted to know exactly what online literacy practices were occurring in virtual school contexts and how students respond to texts.

Focusing on the student discussions, in order to examine Critical Literacy practices, the authors analyzed how the discussions were framed in relation to selection, sequencing, and pacing of online discussions. In the end, their findings varied according to the method by which each discussion prompt was framed. Specifically, if the coordinator rather than the teacher, had control over selection, sequencing, and pacing of online discussion, then those Critical Literacy practices valued by the official curriculum

appeared to have been supported. In this scenario, students were less interactive in the online mode and, thus, the full potential of the Internet was not realized. In the cases where the teacher had more autonomy, the Critical Literacy practices valued by the official curriculum appeared less supported. In this scenario students appeared to be more interactive. Subsequently, the Internet facilitated interactive thinking and communication between participants, rather than simply functioning as a site for publication. What these varied findings suggest, according to the authors, is that teachers need clearer guidelines related to the teaching of Critical Literacy practices valued by the official curriculum. They note that their proposed framework is a way to identify the extent to which the guidelines are clear and the extent to which they are successfully implemented. Similar to studies discussed above (e.g., Pirbhai-Ilich, 2010), the implication is that there is need for more research that examines what teachers do to foster student Critical Literacy practices.

According to Love and Simpson, the official curriculum values such Critical Literacy practices as: identifying the ways by which a variety of texts present ideological stances and how these stances affect the reader's attitude; analyzing how writers use language to present these stances; and how these stances position the reader. This adherence begins to raise questions related to the nature of Critical Literacy itself. In other words, does adherence to Critical Literacy practices valued by an official curriculum imply that certain Critical Literacy practices are privileged over others? Might the answer to such a question lead one to a critical appraisal of the official curriculum itself, one that explores the nature of the prompts (especially those implemented in

situations whereby the teacher - and students - has little autonomy)? Taking into consideration, for example, Lewison et al.'s (2002) four components of Critical Literacy, might one conceivably question the extent to which the official curriculum encourages students to *interrogate multiple viewpoints* and, thus, to ask of the official curriculum itself: "whose voices are heard and whose are missing" (p. 382)?

Although they do not discuss this, their findings also suggest the need to extend Critical Literacies into the digital realm, especially in ways that privilege student critique of, and through, new media texts. The same questions noted above may also apply to the digital/online medium itself. In other words, while asking of the official curriculum the extent to which it honors specific components of Critical Literacy, one might also ask how setting the tasks within specific digital/online contexts relates to those components.

In turning to the more recent Avila and Moore (2012) study one can see these questions begin to get raised, especially in the authors' discussion of the underlying tensions that exist between the notion of a standardized curriculum and the nature of Critical Literacy itself. Ultimately, two questions that may need more exploration are: to what extent might a standard curriculum fully value all components of Critical Literacy; and, while valuing certain Critical Literacy components, in what ways does the standard curriculum take into consideration varying new media contexts? In the end, Avila and Moore (2012) begin to suggest the answer to this question resides in the teacher. They note that standards cannot, and should not, dictate to teachers how to reconcile the differences that exist between a sociocultural and autonomous conception of literacy.

Teachers Use Various Strategies to Foster Critical Literacy

Practices within the Classroom

To this point, my review has centered on student Critical Literacy practices within the classroom. Specifically, I have noted that findings suggest when students engage with both traditional academic and Popular Culture texts they demonstrate the capacity for Critical Literacy practices such as critical reading, critical discussion, and certain kinds of critical text production. I have also noted that such engagement might compliment national and/or state standards and may bridge to academic literacies. While these previous findings begin to inform the first research question I addressed in this study, I also noted some studies show that in certain situations Critical Literacy practices may be limited. Thus, their findings begin to complicate the ways in which my second research question is informed. For example, these studies (Howard-Bender & Mulcahy, 2007; Pirbhai-Ilich, 2010) imply that, at least in part, the limited results may be a function of the teacher's instructional strategies.

Given this, it is important to not only characterize the kinds of Critical Literacy practices with which students engage, it is also important to explore the kinds of strategies their teachers employ. As such, the previous published research reviewed here indicates that teachers: a) used a variety of texts to problematize social and historical structures; b) engaged multimodalities by asking students to create their own texts; and c) reframed the teacher-student relationship as a dialogic one (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Jackson, 2011; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Lopez, 2011; Spector & Jones, 2007).

Using Various Texts to Problematize Social and Historical Structures

In a study conducted in 2007, for example, Spector and Jones featured a teacher who challenged students to reconfigure their understanding of the social and historical contexts associated with Anne Frank's experiences during the Holocaust. In particular, the teacher shared texts with students that countered certain inaccurate portrayals of Frank's life during this time. Texts such as movie clips and the textbook's introductory passage to the Holocaust highlighted multiple (and contradictory) versions of Anne Frank's life. Based on prior understandings and textual representations, the authors noted that students held "exoticized" beliefs about the Nazis and "often refer[ed] to [them] as 'demonic'" (p. 45). Incorporating a variety of texts challenged these notions. In addition to reading, the teacher also countered their previously held beliefs by asking them to create monologues that explored and interrogated the Nazis' point of view. Such practices align with Critical Literacy components that involve *analyzing multiple* and, at times, *contradictory worldviews* (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013).

In a similar vein, in co-teaching a unit on Shakespeare's *Othello*, Johnson and Ciancio (2003) used a variety of texts to foster Critical Literacy practices. In addition to the novelized version of the play, the authors also used student-selected song lyrics, video clips from documentaries centering on race relations, and poetry written by teenage poets. Asking students to bring in and analyze song lyrics, the authors noted, helped them connect the text to their lives. In addition, film clips supported students' critique of social and historical structures as they relate to race, which led to a discussion of

stereotyping. In the end, student production of certain texts, such as collages and poems, functioned as Critical Literacy practices.

Engaging Multimodalities by Asking Students to Create Their Own Texts

Johnson and Ciancio's (2003) findings related to student production of texts suggest that teachers also foster Critical Literacy practices by engaging students' multimodalities. Similarly, Howard-Bender and Mulcahy (2007) found, that when their teacher-participant used a digital teaching strategy the authors termed Cyberlessons, they were also able to engage the student participants' multimodalities. They argued that by exploring the use of this New Literacies instructional strategy educators may make learning more relevant and, thus, motivate students. Literature Cyberlessons, according to the authors, combine reading processes with Internet technology, which can boost comprehension and increase student engagement. However, as noted above, because the teacher framed the lesson around student-generated reading comprehension questions, the students did not engage with Critical Literacies. Thus, interacting with and through new media texts was limited. Based on this study, it appears, then, that using multiple texts (whether digital or print-based) and multimodalities alone may not guarantee success in fostering student Literacy practices that align with specific Critical Literacy components.

Fostering a Dialogic Teacher-Student Relationship

Other findings suggest that success in fostering Critical Literacy practices may also require re-visioning the relationship between teacher and student. In other words, when teachers structure their classroom in ways that foster dialogic interaction (Freire, 1973), Critical Literacy practices may be fostered (Desai & Marsh, 2005; Lopez, 2011).

For example, Desai and Marsh (2003), in using dialogue about writing and the student participants' personal experiences, the co-teachers provided a context for the students to share their work with other students, which they claimed was a vehicle for social action. In this case, the authors suggested that creating and sharing spoken word texts, regardless of the context, amounts to social action. Similarly, Lesley (2008) noted that by using a dialogic approach to classroom discussion, students demonstrated that such Critical Literacy practices might align with certain Critical Literacy components (Vasquez et al., 2013) such as questioning traditional notions of poverty. Interestingly, incorporating this Critical Pedagogy instructional strategy, Lesley argued, fostered student agency within the context of the classroom; students "disrupt[ed] previous examples of traditional teacher-student discourse" (p. 187). Finally, Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) found that because the teacher-participant in their study encouraged student critical dialogue, certain student dialogue disrupted traditional notions of classroom talk. In other words, their non-traditional form of "banter" disrupted traditional norms for classroom discussions about race relations.

Although few in number, studies (Leland et al., 1999; Schieble, 2012) that focus on critical conversations in particular, are consistent with Lesley's (2008) and Johnson and Vasudevan's (2012) findings. In framing critical conversations as discussions "about fairness and justice; [that] encourage children to ask why some groups of people are positioned as 'others'" (p. 70), Leland et al. note that such conversations function to highlight student voices. By focusing on "the real issues that exist in the world in which they are living," the authors argue such conversations are those that "we cannot afford to

ignore” (p. 73). Likewise, Schieble (2012) notes that such critical conversations provide a space for exploring certain “tensions in perspective” (p. 214), such as those related to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Despite these findings, where this previous research on critical conversations is limited is in its scope. For one, Leland et al. (1999) and Schieble (2012) narrowly apply such discussions to examining the ways students might enact a critical stance toward traditional (e.g., Young Adult novels; children’s books) rather non-traditional texts. Doing so narrows the potential contexts for fostering student Critical Literacy practices. Considering the myriad of texts (both multimodal and multimedia) with which students interact on a day-to-day basis, this is an important limitation to note (Avila & Pandya, 2013; Kress, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009).

In sum, when teachers used a variety of texts (both print and non-print and both popular culture and academic), engaged multimodalities, and allowed for critical dialogue, previous studies suggest they fostered student Critical Literacy practices. Exploring this aspect of previously published research on student Critical Literacy practices within the school served to inform the first research question to this study, especially as these previous studies highlight the successes and challenges of such instructional strategies. However, it was equally informative to highlight instructional strategies that need more attention in research on secondary students’ Critical Literacy practices. As such, I now turn to the studies’ implications for future classroom instructional practices.

Suggestions for Improved Critical Literacy Instruction

Future strategies suggested in the studies reviewed here include extending lessons into the digital realm, fostering a wider variety of practices, and developing support groups for teachers who wish to build on new and existing Critical Literacy instruction (Avila & Moore, 2012; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Love & Simpson, 2005; Spector & Jones, 2007). For example, Avila and Moore (2012) suggest that, within the context of the classroom, teachers could extend digitally-based lessons to include texts in which students themselves are interested. They note that such lessons could include a balance between critique and enjoyment of these student-centered texts in an online medium such as the blog. They add, in addition to critiquing student-centered texts, teachers should “model for the students the process of critiquing the [Common Core State] standards” (p. 32).

Likewise, Love, and Simpson (2007) noted that teachers should treat texts as ideological and literacy as being multimodal. In this regard, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) and Morrell (2002) argue that teachers should include student out-of-school literacy practices even as they strive to meet state and national standards. Finally, although Desai and Marsh (2005) set their study in an afterschool program, they noted that by incorporating performance poetry in their classroom instruction, teachers may connect with their students in ways that foster Critical Literacy practices, especially in relation to student identity. In order to support teachers as they begin such work, Lopez (2011) noted that more experienced Critical Literacy educators can form groups of “critical friends” (p. 79) as a means to support their instruction.

In sum, although not always stated explicitly, what these studies suggest is that exploring student Critical Literacy practices may be informed by drawing on an interdisciplinary framework that includes a New Literacies and Critical Pedagogy perspective. This is especially applicable when considering those practices that occur within new media contexts (Moje, 2009).

Gaps in Research

Certain studies reviewed here call for further examination of the ways students engage in Critical Literacy practices through the use of specific texts (Love & Simpson, 2005; Avila & Moore, 2012). Such discussions begin to get at one of the criticisms of Critical (Media) Literacy suggested by Burnett and Merchant (2011), that Critical Literacy practices should not focus solely toward traditional and new media texts, but should be expanded to include what we do with and through them. To this point, Avila and Moore (2012) suggest one implication of their study is that teachers can assist students in developing their “digital voices” (p. 31). The authors suggest that this, in turn, might result in students sharing their critical perspectives with text creators as well as the general public. The Lopez (2011) study reviewed above further suggests the role teachers might play in fostering such literacy practices. Specifically, their study suggests the potential for using performance poems as model texts that might foster student critical perspective-taking. Likewise, Desai and Marsh (2005) argue that Interactive-Auditory discourses present in spoken-word poetry might aid in teachers’ attempts at “facilitating critical engagement” (p. 88).

Thus, in addition to further exploration of how students use specific texts as a means for critical perspective-taking, one specific area in which existing research might be extended is exploring what teachers do specifically to foster student Critical Literacy practices, especially within new media contexts. While much of the previously published research in Critical Literacy tends to emphasize critical reading/consumption (Bean & Moni, 2003; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Lopez, 2011), studies that do explore student text usage rarely examine how teachers might employ model texts to extend critical text consumption toward critical text production. Morrell (2003) argues that critical text production:

is situated within the experiences of students and uses . . . their real-world experiences and struggles as a starting point, but it quickly becomes about the business of social justice. Critical text production is about naming oppression, certainly, but it is also about eradicating oppression and injustices through the creation of counter-texts, critical texts, that present alternate realities as they simultaneously critique the existing narratives that promote the status quo. (p. 23)

This is important, because as students continue to interact in rapidly expanding new media contexts, with and toward both locally—and globally—expanding audiences, there is a growing need for teachers to foster opportunities through which students might resist, and/or counter dominant Discourse understandings that position some in marginalizing ways (Janks, 2010). However, although studies such as those conducted by Lopez (2011) and Desai and Marsh (2005) report on how teachers might use poetry, for example, as models for student critical text production, few, if any report in any serious detail on how teachers might use both traditional and new media multimodal texts and text sets to foster student critical text production.

For example, although the students in the Spector and Jones study (2007) were able to assess the degree to which formal/academic texts position readers (and vice versa), the authors did not examine in detail the specific ways their teachers fostered such practices. Ultimately, such studies, while reporting on student critical perspective-taking toward texts, do not explore how teachers foster student critical perspective-taking as it occurs in both traditional and new media text production. Without fostering opportunities for critical perspective-taking, student Critical Literacy practices are potentially limited to audiences that exist within the classroom and, thus, potentially limited in terms of action, or the potential for praxis (Freire, 1973; Janks, 2010).

Likewise, Howard-Bender and Mulcahy's findings suggest similar Critical Literacy limitations. Although the authors referenced Lewison et al.'s (2002) four components of Critical Literacy, their findings suggest a need to further explore student literacy practices as they align with specific Critical Literacy components (Vasquez et al., 2013). Finally, although Lopez (2011) found that participants were critically engaged within the classroom setting both with the text and with each other, the concerns raised by the Desai and Marsh and Howard-Bender and Mulcahy articles seem applicable here too: To what extent might students' critical text production align with specific Critical Literacy components? If so, in what ways might their teachers foster this critical engagement?

According to Critical and New Literacy scholars, these concerns are important ones, especially when taking into consideration the degree of connectivity in a world that is both global and local (Burnett & Merchant, 2011). In such a world, in which audiences

are expanding, the potential for students to get positioned both in positive and negative ways is also expanding - which may, for some, result in further marginalization (Kellner & Share, 2007). By extending existing research toward critical text production, educators may learn more about the ways students negotiate the ideological nature of the texts and Discourses they encounter in their daily lives (Giroux, 2011).

Furthermore, few studies explore how teachers might foster student Critical Literacy practices as they extend over the course of an entire semester or school year or across modes and genres. Nearly all of the studies reviewed above, focus either on a single unit of study or on a single mode or genre of communication. Broadening the scope of the study in terms of duration and mode/genre, for this dissertation study provided opportunities to enrich and thicken (Geertz, 1973) the discussion of not just how the students engaged in specific Critical Literacy practices it also allowed for exploring the various ways Mr. Shaw attempted to foster such practices. By exploring, for example, how Mr. Shaw used multimodal texts such as the TED Talk as a model for both Critical Literacy perspective-taking and for rhetorical argumentation, this dissertation study extends existing research. It also extends existing research by exploring Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering Critical Literacy practices over the course of an entire semester and across multiple modes and genres. Such an extended examination allowed for the exploration of the various and complex ways and degrees to which student literacy practices aligned with specific Critical Literacy components.

Finally, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) argue that a popular culture pedagogy "can be the centerpiece of culturally responsive literacy pedagogy in urban

classrooms” (p. 285), especially as it relates to Critical Literacy practices. Given this, they ask an important question: Can research in this area produce results that suggest using non-traditional texts can function as a bridge to increasing academic literacy? This suggestion establishes a rationale for conducting research that features student Literacy practices that align with specific Critical Literacy components as well as academic standards, such as those called for by the CCSS. To that extent, Lesley’s (2008) study serves to strengthen this claim. She noted that her findings suggest future research “needs to be conducted on ways to bridge ‘at risk’ adolescent’s non-school, multiple forms of literacy with school definitions and requirements for literacy” (p. 188).

This literature review, thus, led me to examine the ways a high school English teacher fostered student Critical Literacy practices and how the students he taught might engage in those practices. In particular, while there is a need for studies that explore in rich detail exactly how a teacher draws on multiple resources to foster specific Critical Literacy practices, there is also a need for studies that explore how students variously engage in such critical perspective-taking.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation study, research that examines how secondary students engage in specific Critical Literacy practices and the ways their teachers attempt to foster such engagement is important. For one, such research may serve to highlight student voices as they variably challenge and/or take up certain positionings. Secondly, it may also highlight what their teacher does to foster Critical Literacy practices. This is important, because adding to what is known about critical perspective-taking may aid educators in supporting students as they negotiate the systems of meaning that permeate their day-to-day interactions (Janks, 2010; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2014).

One way to do this is by focusing on a single teacher, the two classes of students he works with, and individual cases within each class. Such a scheme allows for highlighting uniquely individual student voices while balancing those voices over the larger sample of participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Stake, 1995). Whereas focusing on specific students may emphasize the ways they engage in certain Critical Literacy practices, broadening that focus may further contextualize their day-to-day classroom interactions with their classmates, their teacher, and the Discourses at work in their lives.

With this in mind, two research questions guided this dissertation study's plan for site and participant selection, as well as data collection and analysis: *In what way(s) does a high school teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in his Tenth and Eleventh Grade English classes? In what way(s) do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices?*

Research Site

The site for the study is located in a small Southeastern city at a public Early/Middle College (grades 9-12) located on the campus of a two-year technical college. As of the 2010-11 school year, student demographics at the Early/Middle College, which I will call the Central Technical Community College (CTCC) Early/Middle College, were: 47% White; 36% African American; 8% Hispanic; and 2% Asian/Pacific Islander. Thirty-seven percent of the student population received free or reduced lunch (See Appendix B for complete school demographics). The study took place in one 10th grade English class and one 11th grade English class.

This site was selected based on two informal conversations with the teacher during the fall semester of the school year in which the study took place. Specifically, in order to explore the first research question, I selected a site at which a teacher sought to engage students in Critical Literacy practices. Informal conversations with Mr. Shaw during the semester before the study suggested that he actively sought to implement New and Critical Literacy/Pedagogy strategies within his English classes. During our first conversation, he mentioned that he seeks to model classroom talk after Freire's (1973) dialogic method of teacher/student interaction and that he believes in the importance of

incorporating non-canonical/non-traditional texts. As he framed it, such texts included films, advertisements, websites, and song lyrics. Although he did not use the terms New Literacies, Critical Pedagogy and/or Critical Literacy, teaching reading and writing with these kinds of texts is consistent with these three approaches to literacy learning (Moje, 2009; Street, 2003; Vasquez et al., 2013). It should be noted that the teacher's Critical Pedagogy philosophy is one that he held prior to the conversations he had with me. When taking my first research question into consideration (*In what ways does a teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in his high school tenth and eleventh grade English classes*), it was important for me to recruit a teacher whose established teaching philosophy was consistent with New and Critical Literacy/Pedagogy perspectives. This is because few studies explore in any serious detail the ways teachers attempt to foster Critical Literacy practices in secondary schools (Behrman, 2006).

The CTCC Early/Middle College states its mission is “to provide rigorous, relevant, engaging instruction and positive relationships to eliminate failures, suspension, and drop outs, ensuring that 100% of our diverse students graduate in four or five years with an Associate's Degree or some college credit” (CTCC Early/Middle College website, 2014). Similarly, the school vision statement located on the CTCC Early/Middle College website in part notes that the “demographics [of the school] mirror that of” the county in which it is located and that students who attend the school, in general, “will have some risk of dropping out of high school, though be capable of being at least proficient.” Out of the 300 students that apply for admission into the school, 75 are accepted annually, based on “academic and social need.” During the course of the

study, Mr. Shaw served on the admissions committee for the school, which gave him an insider perspective on the admissions process. In talking with him about the student body, he noted:

We try to take students who don't fit well into a traditional school setting. So they've been bullied, or they just feel high anxiety, or they don't like sports . . . they may be first generation college students. They may have single parent households. We try to cater towards those kids so that we can give them a jumpstart on their college lives with some support behind them.

Characterizing the school as one that appeals to students who "don't fit well" in other traditional schools appeared to be consistent with the experiences of at least two of the interviewed students. For example, when I asked Alex (sophomore) why he wanted to come to the school, he said, "I was harassed a lot at my home school." Additionally, Shane (junior) said that he came to the school because when students discovered he was a transgender person, they bullied him severely.

Beginning at noon and ending at 5 pm, the school's daily schedule included both traditional high school and technical college classes, which allowed students to pursue an associate's degree while completing their requirements for high school graduation. Class sizes at the school averaged 12 students per course section. All core courses (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) followed the standard course of study for the state in which the school was located, and all students were required to complete the end of course testing administered to the state's public high school students.

Participants

Mr. Shaw

At the time of data collection, Mr. Shaw, an African American male, had been teaching tenth and eleventh grade English at the CTCC Early/Middle College for three and a half years. In each of those years, as he explained, he attempted to foster student Critical Literacy practices as part of his personal Critical Pedagogy. Thus, although Mr. Shaw may be considered an early career educator, his level of Critical Literacy understanding may best be described as experienced. According to Lewison et al. (2002), unlike newcomers and novices, whose experience in critical practices are relatively limited, for Mr. Shaw, each text, each conversation, and each classroom project is an opportunity for a dialogic interaction in which students have the opportunity to question, for example, dominant Discourse worldviews. I recruited Mr. Shaw primarily for this reason. On numerous occasions, he described his personal pedagogy as critical and focused on social justice issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and class. As such, a rich description of his critical perspective appears in the findings section of this research study. Given his personal Critical Pedagogy, his participation in this study, thus, represents an intrinsic case (Stake, 1995). In other words, I selected Mr. Shaw to explore how he implements his goal for fostering student critical perspective-taking. Recruiting Mr. Shaw, then, attended to my first research question.

The Students

The student participants for the study were members of the teacher's Tenth and Eleventh grade English classes. According to Mr. Shaw, "all of [the courses at this

particular school] are honors courses, even though at a traditional school, some of our students would be placed in ‘CP’ [College Prep] classes.” Thus, all student participants were enrolled in what is traditionally considered to be an academically challenging sophomore or junior English course. Of the 22 students I recruited, 21 students (and their parents) assented/consented. Appendix C provides demographic data for each class. Recruiting all students served to balance concerns associated with qualitative data analysis. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), sample size should not be so large that collecting thick, rich data is constrained. On the other hand, it should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve “data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy” (p. 242). Recruiting all students, along with data collection procedures described below, generated a data set of approximately 84 total video/audio taped classroom observations (42 eleventh grade sessions and 42 tenth grade sessions) for the 90 minute block classes, 10 individual student interviews, and 17 individual short conversations. In total, the data set amounted to approximately 243 hours of observational transcript data, seven hours of student interview data, four hours of teacher interview data, and three hours of student and teacher informal conversation data.

Sampling

The specific sampling strategy I employed closely resembles a nested design (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Nested within the observation sample, I recruited a subsample of six students (five students and their parents assented/consented). I interviewed each of the subset participants twice individually. These participants served as key informants who spoke to my second research question: *In what ways do the*

students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices? At times when students discussed Mr. Shaw's teaching, the interview data also spoke to my first research question. I chose to recruit these six students for two main reasons. For one, during initial classroom observations, to varying degrees, each of the students engaged in the Critical Literacy practices Mr. Shaw attempted to foster. During the first two weeks of observation, while one student (Alex), for example, engaged in almost every critical conversation, another (Lola) rarely spoke at all. Interviewing these two students, thus, allowed me to explore a variety of student perspectives/attitudes toward classroom interactions. Secondly, the students represented a range of cultural perspectives consistent with the larger participant pool. Because both the sophomore and junior classes were diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and class, it was important for me to recruit a subsample that reflected that diversity. This specific sampling strategy most closely resembles a nested design, which may involve "choosing settings, groups, and/or individuals based on specific characteristic(s) because their inclusion provides the researcher with compelling insight about a phenomenon of interest" (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007, p. 285). The "compelling insight" I hoped to attain centered on the subsample of students who, during observations, demonstrated varying degrees of engagement in Critical Literacy practices.

During data analysis I selected from within the subsample two individual cases (Angilé and Alex) that served to further explore the second research question. While the subsample represented a range of cultural perspectives from the larger participant pool, Angilé's and Alex's cases demonstrated how students engaged uniquely in Critical

Literacy practices. Data analysis indicated that within the contexts of their classes both students served as intrinsic cases (Stake, 1995). Detailed descriptions of Angílé and Alex can be found in the findings. Employing this scheme helped address the second research question in that it served to contextualize and enrich data collection and analysis associated with the ways students engage in specific Critical Literacy practices.

Data Collection

Although this research study is focused on one semester of literacy instruction within two classrooms, its methodology was ethnographically influenced. As a researcher I was immersed in the setting two to three days a week for up to three hours each day (See Appendix D). The data collected focused on the teens' text usage and classroom interactions as demonstrated by their Critical Literacy practices (Alvermann, Hagood, & Williams, 2001; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). Because I sought to describe how the students engaged in Critical Literacy practices in their day-to-day interactions, I highlighted what they said, did, and produced when they communicated with each other, as well as with and through formal/academic and popular/digital texts, on a regular basis. Thus, I sought to identify and describe certain kinds of interactions occurring within their "world" (Schram, 2006, p. 96). Classroom observations helped to address the types of interaction associated with their literacy learning and, thus, linked to the first and second research questions.

In addition to observing classroom interactions, with the permission of the students and their parents/guardians, I conducted individual personal interviews with the subset participants. I also engaged various students (and Mr. Shaw) in short informal

conversations before and/or after observing specific class sessions. Interviewing the students, as well as engaging in short conversations, allowed me to gather data associated with the meanings they made out of the Critical Literacy practices with which they engaged. In other words, interview and conversation data served to enrich observational findings associated with the kinds of Critical Literacy practices through which students engaged (RQ2). Additionally, observing the teacher and students as they interacted with each other allowed me to gather data associated with the teaching practices employed as a means to foster student Critical Literacy practices (RQ1).

Data sources for the study included: one interview in the early and final stages of data collection with each of the subset participants (total of two interviews each); interviews with the teacher occurring once in the early stages, once at the midway point, and once after the semester had ended; periodic short informal conversations before, in-between, or after class sessions with individual or groups of students and with the teacher; student work samples (e.g., free writes, projects, papers, and worksheets) collected throughout the period of data collection; researcher field notes recorded in a researcher's journal during observation; and researcher reflections audio-recorded immediately before or after data collection as reflections of direct observation (See Appendix E for Data Collection Crosswalk). The researcher field notes and reflections, in particular, served two purposes: (a), they helped inform data sources, especially as they pertained to student participation; and (b) because they focused on my position as a researcher who was also a former teacher, they served to help minimize threats to trustworthiness (Anderson, 1989; Tracy, 2010).

The Interviews

According to Drever (1995), semi-structured interviewing is particularly flexible when conducting research on a small scale. By designing open-ended questions, data derived from the personal interviews served as student-generated evidence that described the students' Critical Literacy practices. Alvermann et al. (2001) found that the "meaning-making and literacy strategies adolescents use" (To know and not to know, para. 1), as reflected in their literacy practices, are often reported during interviews. The purpose of the interviews, then, was to ascertain: how a variety of texts get used and produced in the literacy practices of the participants as well as the ways the participants negotiated their critical perspectives through the production and use of these texts (RQ2).

I interviewed each student individually twice (see Appendix F). With the permission of the students and their parents/guardians, I conducted the personal interviews in locations that were off-campus and most convenient and comfortable for the students and parents. For example, one student preferred to interview at a local bakery, while another preferred to interview at a religious (Islamic) after-school daycare where he and his aunt volunteered. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix G. Because students chose not to be interviewed in their homes, I provided disposable digital cameras for them to take pictures of the areas in their homes that would best capture the literacy practices with which they engaged in that setting. Of the five students, four returned cameras (two sophomores and two juniors). Asking the students to capture on film the places in their homes where they engaged in reading and writing activities (print and non-

print) helped me better understand the students and to contextualize their (Critical) Literacy practices (RQ2).

The three interviews I conducted with Mr. Shaw during the semester (see Appendix H for interview protocol) took place at sites that were most convenient to him. As such, Mr. Shaw chose to interview in a private office on the campus of the community college where the CTCC Early/Middle College was located (twice) and at a local coffee shop near his home (once). Length of interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. The purpose of the teacher interviews was to ascertain how he characterizes his teaching practices, including his understanding of what constitutes literacy and the degree to which he believed those practices/understandings fostered student critical perspective-taking. As such, they also served to explore his Critical Pedagogy (RQ1). Additionally, during the teacher interviews, codes emerged that were related to the affordances and constraints associated with his attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices. Thus, in addition to being coded within pre-established categorical codes, data associated with teacher interviews also got organized within emergent codes (Creswell, 2004).

Work Samples

Student work samples (See Appendix I) addressed aspects of the research questions that pertained to Critical Literacy practices as they intersected with print and non-print texts (RQ2). At times, they also generated data that focused on the degree to which the teacher's instruction fostered student Critical Literacy practices (RQ1). Samples included (but are not limited to) student free-writes, projects, reflections, and formal papers. Certain print and non-print work-sample data combined what some call

“old media” and “new media” (Gainer & Lapp, 2010) in order to generate thicker understandings of the students’ literacy practices. For example, one student assignment (called the Media Analysis Project), for certain juniors, included a digitally recorded interview and analysis paper. In addition to student projects, the teacher asked students to engage with “old” media such as novels and historical documents as well as “new” media such as Internet videos and popular music song lyrics.

Observation

An observation/reflection protocol (see Appendix J) influenced by Lewison et al. (2002) and Vasquez et al. (2013) guided researcher fieldnotes/reflections and audio/video recordings collected during all phases of the study. Video- and audio-taping supported the observations; the video camera was placed in a stationary position at an angle that captured the participant pool during whole group instruction. During small-group activities and instruction, the video camera focused on specific groups. The same was done with audio recordings in that I placed audio recorders within small groups in order to document their conversations. During whole group instruction, one bi-directional microphone was placed at the front of the room while two other microphones were placed at back corners. This generated 81 ninety-minute video- and/or audio-taped classroom observations (captured by three different audio recorders and one video recorder), which were augmented by teacher field notes (Maxwell, 2005), work samples, and student journals. Taken together, the data generated while students participated in English Language Arts activities provided a record of the events as well as the way the students (and teacher) interpreted and made meaning out of those events. Combining these data

with the interviews, conversations, and student work samples further enriched my descriptions of day-to-day classroom interactions that served to address both research questions. For example, during interviews and/or conversations Mr. Shaw often reflected on his attempts at fostering student critical perspective-taking during specific class sessions. Likewise, during interviews and/or conversations, while students reflected on their participation in classroom conversations and or creation and presentation of critical texts, they also reflected on their interpretations of Mr. Shaw's teaching practices.

Data Analysis

The reason the research method of this study took a qualitative approach is that the interdisciplinary framework on which I draw is set in a sociocultural paradigm (Gee, 2005; Kellner & Share, 2007; Morrell, 2011; Street, 2003). According to Wertsch (1991), "a sociocultural mind begins with the assumption that action is mediated and that it cannot be separated from the milieu in which it is carried out" (p. 18). This means that one's analysis must be linked in some way to context. Because qualitative approaches generally emphasize context, and the actions of the participants as the unit of analysis, they are consistent with a sociocultural perspective. According to Creswell (2005), qualitative studies take place in specific contexts, use multiple methods, and are emergent and interpretive. Because the qualitative researcher is interpretive, s/he sees the phenomena based on context and socio-historical-political perspectives. Thus, framing my study in this paradigm means that my method of data collection must be linked to the context in which the research occurred. Given that context is in flux, the method of analysis must take an interpretive and emergent perspective. A coding scheme as

described below does just that (emergent categories), while at the same time it acknowledges the body of research that came before it (organizational categories) (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013).

In connecting to the aspects of my research questions that focus on what the teacher does to foster Critical Literacy practices within the classroom (RQ1) as well as how the students engage in elements of those practices (RQ2), I began with organizational categories (Creswell, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a way to build from codes to themes. Drawing on a combination of Lewison et al.'s (2002) and Vasquez et al.'s, (2013) frameworks for Critical Literacy, I started with the following categories: (a) *disrupting the commonplace*; (b) *interrogating multiple viewpoints*; (c) *focusing on sociopolitical issues*; and (d) *taking action and promoting social justice*. While Lewison et al.'s (2002) framework established the general categories/components provided above, Vasquez et al.'s (2013) served to refine and extend these categories. For example, in the category for *focuses on sociopolitical issues*, according to Lewison et al. (2002), students might, among other things, “use literacy to engage in the politics of daily life” (p. 383). In addition, Vasquez et al. (2013), for the same category, note that students might, among other things, interrogate privilege and status, investigate oppression, use resistance, dialogue, and public debate. Designing an analytical protocol that focuses on these two sources allowed me to draw on the four overarching components of Critical Literacy.

However, because I looked for emergent codes, I also maintained a nuanced approach that allowed for individual variation within the larger organizational scheme.

Prior research has indicated that students engage variously in Critical Literacy practices associated with these four Critical Literacy components (Avila & Moore, 2012; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Jackson, 2001; Johnson & Ciancio, 2003; Lopez, 2011; Love & Simpson, 2005). Thus, this organizational scheme (categorical; emergent coding) served to establish specificity and consistency between data collection, analysis, and my research questions while remaining open to those codes that emerged during analysis (See Appendix K for first phase data analysis excerpt from the January 29 sophomore observation).

As noted above, in the first phase I used Lewison et al.'s (2002) and Vasquez et al.'s (2013) components of Critical Literacy to code for student Critical Literacy practices as students connected to and through texts and social relations (RQ2). For example, early in the semester during a critical conversation (see Appendix L for conversation excerpt) about a magazine article centered on the caning of an American citizen by Philippine authorities, Mr. Shaw asked, "Do you think it's ok if it's just a small group of individuals who are in control of justice? Or should it be something that everybody is able to have a say in?" In response to this question several students suggested that everyone "should have a say," because those in positions of power, may be biased (or racist) and, possibly, corrupt. Because of this, a small group of people should not be the only ones who "have a say in [issues of justice]." In this example the teacher used open-ended questioning to foster participation in a critical conversation, which involved students questioning the status quo (Lewison et al., 2002) within a governing judicial system (Philippines). Specifically, they "challenged the status quo of unequal power relations" (Lewison et al.,

2002). As such, this short excerpt got organized within the categorical code: *focusing on socio-political issues*. Examples like these, in which students engaged in the Critical Literacy practice of *focusing on socio-political issues* within a critical conversation, paired with numerous other examples of critical conversations (sophomores - 39 times; juniors - 23 times) to address the second research question: *In what ways do students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices within the classroom?*

In addition to using the categorical codes to address the second research question, I used the same codes to organize what the teacher did to foster these Critical Literacy practices (RQ1). In the case of the example above, the teacher asked an open-ended question to engage the students in a critical conversation. Thus, the example and others like it (sophomores - 35 times; juniors - 43 times) also got coded as datum that addressed the first research question: *In what ways does the teacher foster Critical Literacy practices within the classroom?* It should be noted that this excerpt is part of a larger critical conversation that includes other instances in which the teacher asked open-ended questions and during which students challenged the status quo of unequal power relations.

Within that larger critical conversation, at times, students engaged in other Critical Literacy practices. Thus, within any given critical conversation, there may have been multiple categorical codes. For example, earlier (in the same discussion described above), the teacher asked if the same incident occurred in the United States judicial system, do the students believe the American citizen would be punished? (See Appendix M for conversation excerpt) In the short exchange that followed, the teacher used open-

ended questions to foster the critical conversation. But, in this case, Alex's response got organized into two categories: because he challenged the status quo of unequal power relations (based on race) he *focused on sociopolitical issues* and because he suggested that the status quo is related to the media he *disrupted the commonplace*. In sum, these data codings took place in the first phase of data analysis where each day of observation was coded in a separate coding chart (See Appendix K for first phase data analysis) for the four Critical Literacy components. However, during this first phase, I also noted instances when codes appeared to emerge but did not always fit within this categorical coding scheme. For example, certain codes surfaced that represented Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices. Such codes were contextual in nature; in other words, specific strategies were related to his personal Critical Pedagogy, the CTCC Early/Middle College, and/or the local school system and state in which he taught. As such, I not only organized certain datum within categorical codes I also organized it within emergent codes. For example, Appendix K contains data that begins to document how Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations (see cell labeled *Emergent Codes*).

Furthermore, as the first phase of analysis progressed, data began to suggest that within the nested subsample (Owuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) of interviewees, two individual students engaged in Critical Literacy practices in ways that were unique to both the interviewee subset as well as the larger participant pool. As such, codes began to demonstrate how the two individual students (Angilé and Alex) emerged as intrinsic cases (Stake, 1995). Thus, while I coded interview data for all five interviewees, analysis

associated with these two participants reflected the unique nature of their critical perspective-taking. As noted above, detailed description and analysis can be found in the findings.

In the second phase of data analysis, I identified larger specific emergent substantive/theoretical categories generated by the variety of data sources I collected. In this case, I identified emergent categories within which data from each of the four organizational Critical Literacy codes got categorized (see Appendix N for RQ1 second phase coding for the sophomore class). This connecting strategy of returning to each class session's categorical coding chart (and to the transcripts themselves) to further identify larger emergent categories under which they might get organized served to contextualize the pre-established categorical codes (Creswell, 2004). For example, in addition to being organized within a categorical code (*disruption of the commonplace*), the data excerpt in Appendix L (in which Maria, Maybell, and Young Esquire III discuss bias) also got organized within a larger emergent/substantive code: *Critical Conversation*. This is because the excerpt (and many others like it) began to take on the characteristics of such conversations (Leland et al., 1999; Schieble, 2012). Such coding, thus, broadened the scope of data analysis and ultimately began to suggest emerging themes related to Critical Literacy practices with which students engaged (RQ2), and the degree to which Mr. Shaw fosters these practices (RQ1). During this phase of data analysis, both critical conversations and critical text production began to emerge as salient codes.

As noted in the introduction of this dissertation study, there is a need for more research that combines Critical and New Literacies. This is, in part, because few studies (Huang, 2011; Jackson, 2011; Pirbhai-Ilich, 2010) have taken an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the kinds of Critical Literacy practices with which students engage. Thus, in the second phase, I also identified theoretical categories that focused on the various texts/media toward and through which the students engaged (technological aspects of New Literacies), the degree to which the Critical Literacy practices were collaborative and/or multimodal (relational aspects of New Literacies), and the ways Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering Critical Literacy practices aligned with his personal Critical Pedagogy (See *Critical Pedagogy: Leveling the field* column located in Appendix N). In sum, in the second phase, I collapsed the categorical and emergent codes recorded in the first phase. I did this by identifying those larger emergent/substantive and theoretical codes associated with traditional and/or new media texts (RQ2) and as Mr. Shaw drew on his personal Critical Pedagogy to foster student literacy practices (RQ1). In the end, all data associated with student Critical Literacy practices got organized according to categorical and/or emergent/substantive codes.

Proceeding in this way I: (a) read through the transcripts and work samples making notes about the general underlying ideas; (b) re-read making notes that began to get at underlying meanings; (c) listed the topics that emerged from the transcripts and work samples and began to cluster together similar topics; (d) identified codes for the topics and returned to the coding charts to identify chunks of data that belonged to specific categorical and emergent codes; and (e) began to collapse the categories where

needed. Ultimately, throughout the process I organized my coding scheme around three over-arching frames based on theory, concepts, or previous research: (a) data that is expected - from organizational categories; (b) data that is unexpected - from emergent substantive categories; and (c) data that is theoretical - related to Mr. Shaw's personal Critical Pedagogy and New Literacies perspective. Finally, I collapsed the substantive and theoretical codes into salient themes (Creswell, 2004). For example, as noted above, one emergent code was Mr. Shaw's *use of open-ended questions*. Because the data within this emergent code often occurred (28 codes for RQ1) in relation to Mr. Shaw's *Use of the free-write prompt* (45 codes for RQ1), I further collapsed the two codes under the salient theme category: *Use of open-ended questions to foster critical conversations*. In other words, Mr. Shaw's use of the free-write prompt was itself a kind of open-ended question. Thus, it got collapsed, along with the use of open-ended questions, into a single category for examples of how Mr. Shaw fostered conversations that aligned with specific Critical Literacy components.

Because my study is ethnographically influenced, I also used the codes to help contextualize the setting. Thus, in a separate table (see excerpt in Appendix O), I included data from student and teacher interviews that described and/or compared the CTCC Early/Middle College with other public high schools in the area. For example, during a visit Mr. Shaw made to an undergraduate student teacher seminar (that I video-recorded) he described the student body at the CTCC Early/Middle College as being demographically diverse. In his discussion, he noted this is because his school is "mandated to reflect the demographics of the county."

Limitations

When attending to the rigor of their interpretations of any given research project, qualitative researchers tend to frame their discussion, in part, with respect to credibility (Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010). One way qualitative researchers attend to the limitations of credibility is by ensuring that the measures used were the right ones for the phenomena under investigation. This requires a strict adherence to my research questions and knowledge of the methods used in the past. For my dissertation study in particular, past research has used similar organizational categories to link contextual findings to Critical Literacy practices that occur within the classroom (Avila & Moore, 2012; McLaughlin & Devoogd, 2004; Howard-Bender & Mulcahy, 2007). For example, McLaughlin and Devoogd (2004) organized their findings based on such Critical Literacy components as power relations, problem-posing, and praxis. These organizational categories intersect with those noted above (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013), categories that resonate with the components of Critical Literacy established by such scholars as Freire (1973), Giroux (2011), Luke (2012), and Janks (2010). In sum, the organizational categories I used ensured that my data collection and analysis methods connect to my research questions (Shenton, 2004).

A second way to attend to the limitations associated with credibility is through triangulation of data sources, analyses, participants, and theory. I collected multiple forms of data (student work samples and journal entries, teacher researcher fieldnotes and reflections, video- and audiotaping of whole class and small group interaction, personal interviews, and conversations). I also identified both organizational codes and emergent

codes that connected to New and Critical Literacy/Pedagogy perspectives. Each of these methods served to (dis)confirm themes that were beginning to emerge. In addition, I successfully recruited all but one student from the teacher's two classes into a participant pool that included both male and female students. For the subsample of interviewees, I recruited students who identified with various cultural backgrounds, making sure that the interview pool was diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation (See Appendix B). I also used an interdisciplinary theoretical approach in that I drew on three complimentary theoretical frameworks (Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, and New Literacies). In combination, these methods served to minimize the limitations of each individual component (Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010).

It should be noted here that Tracy has extended the notion of triangulation to reflect a more nuanced approach (and perhaps one that is more consistent) for those who proceed from a critical, interpretive, or postmodern framework. In explicating eight overarching criteria for qualitative research, she notes that qualitative credibility involves, among other things, crystallization. She argues that triangulation presupposes a realist perspective, which may contradict the notion of a multiple and socially constructed paradigmatic framework. In other words, just because multiple forms of data point to a specific interpretation does not guarantee the reality toward which these data converge. For example, during my data collection phase, observational data showed that what participants did and what they said, at times, indicated different, even contradictory, values that are real/true within, and even across, given contexts. In his actions (and sometimes his words), Alex, for example, claimed to value diversity; he made a point to

share with me in our second interview that he (a White male) dated an African American girl during the previous school year. He noted that dating her was an example of how his values not only conflict with the values of some of his fellow students, but also how the values he holds, at times, appear to conflict with each other. He said, “[My friends and I] all act pretty racist but I’m pretty sure they’re not all racist. I don’t know, I got judged pretty hard when I dated a Black girl for like four months.” He went on to say, “My friends were sort of like, ‘Oh my gosh Alex, you act like the most racist person ever, why are you dating a Black girl?’ And I was like, ‘I don’t know, I don’t know.’”

To manage such contradictions or apparent inconsistencies in my data collection, analysis, and interpretation, I extended the concept of triangulation toward crystallization. Like triangulation, crystallization involves gathering multiple data types (interview, observation, student work samples, conversations), methods (organizational, emergent categories), and theories (Critical Literacy/Pedagogy, New Literacies). However, its point of departure lies in the notion of interpretation. Interpretation acknowledges that a single truth is but one of many (like the surfaces of a crystal). In other words, it involves reporting on interpretations of data in a contextually-dependent multi-vocal manner. Thus, in the case of Alex, whereas he noted in one part of the interview that he is a racist and in another that he is not, he also noted in other various data sources (including member checks) that his racist remarks are meant as sarcasm and their goal is to engage other students in critical conversations.

Multivocality, according to Tracy (2010), “includes multiple and varied voices in the qualitative report and analysis” (p. 844). She notes that this concept comes out of the

notion of *verstehen*, which in German means to understand. My read of Tracy's comments are consistent with this idea—it involves trying to understand the world from someone else's point of view. A report might then privilege participants' voices; it involves the thick rich description (Geertz, 1973) of what the participants do, say, and produce within a specific context, as well as their interpretation of such interactions. The idea of multivocality allowed me to remain consistent with a Critical Literacy framework. Specifically, by I addressed a central question/concern within the critical paradigm: “whose voices are heard and whose are missing?” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, as cited in Lewison et al., 2002).

Within my study, I attended to this problem by highlighting the student voices. For example, one Critical Literacy component I reported on was: *Interrogating multiple viewpoints*, which occurred 38 times within the junior class alone. When engaging in certain Critical Conversations, student perspectives (voices) at times aligned with this particular component. Examples of such an instance, I noted, occurred three times during a January 31st observation. In one instance, Angílé discussed how popular culture texts, and “the media” in general, portray “Black Americans.” She said:

I personally feel like, you know, the media shows us so much bad stuff about like Black people. I just try to like, I don't know, be different, like, we just show how illiterate Black people can be. So I just try to go away from that, especially like speech and such. You know, like the way we talk and things like that. You know apparently improper English.

This short excerpt (and others like it) highlights Angílé's voice. In it, she not only critiques the dominant Discourse worldview of what it means to be Black in America

(RQ2), she also describes how she negotiates her own personal worldview of what it means to be positioned as “illiterate Black.” Reporting on the ways she negotiates such positionings when interacting with other students, ultimately, attended to multivocality, or building a thick rich description (Geertz, 1973) of multiple and varied voices (Tracy, 2010). It provided a way for me to begin to see how the students interpreted the world in various ways.

However, certain students rarely, if ever, participated in these conversations. This was true for one particular junior student, who chose the name Fear as his pseudonym. Because Fear did not engage in critical conversations, I looked for other opportunities to highlight his perspective. One way I did this was through the use of the informal conversation. On a number of occasions, for example, Fear and I discussed his own perspectives on the social justice issues discussed in class. In one such informal conversation that occurred before class, he described to me his attitude toward the US government’s use of drones for surveillance purposes. He explained that he believes “the government doesn’t trust the people.” He said this is particularly evident in its use of drone technology. He elaborated that he was wary of “how [the government is] using it on people, like suspecting people that are terrorists in America.” In terms of attending to multivocality, this informal conversation functioned to (dis)confirm my interpretation that Fear did not engage in critical perspective-taking. On the contrary, his comments to me suggested that his perspective at times aligned with certain Critical Literacy components. Specifically, because he questioned the US Government’s use of drone

technology he *focused on sociopolitical issues*. In fact, later in this informal conversation, he further explained that he disapproved of drone technology because:

. . . they could just go up to any person they suspect, even if they are just a normal person who's not like doing anything illegal, go up in their back yard and look through the window with the drone and just see what they're doing and like basically going against an amendment . . .

Thus, not only did he focus on sociopolitical issues, his comments during our conversation indicated that he made connections between everyday life and societal issues. Interestingly, our particular conversation took place during a unit of study in which Mr. Shaw and the rest of the class engaged in critical conversations also about sociopolitical issues. Thus, whereas my observational data failed to capture Fear's critical perspective-taking, the use of an informal conversation managed to generate thicker and richer data that highlighted his voice.

One possible reason students like Fear may have limited their participation in classroom interactions has to do with the presence of the video-camera. In other words, introducing such devices may have, at times, disrupted day-to-day classroom activities (Baker & Lee, 2011). However, immersing myself in the setting served to minimize this limitation. To make this point more salient, fewer than three weeks into the study, during one observation, several juniors noted that they no longer noticed I was in the classroom. While limitations associated with video-recording inevitably persist, to further minimize this potential limitation, I asked Mr. Shaw to audio-record any class sessions he wished to include as data. Thus, on certain days when I and the video-camera were not present, Mr.

Shaw chose to audio-record both the sophomore and junior interactions (nine total recordings for each class).

While further adding to the corpus of data I collected for that semester, Mr. Shaw's audio-recordings also served as a kind of check on my video-recording. In other words, checking codes that arose from data collected by Mr. Shaw against those that arose from data I collected served to minimize the degree to which video-recording might be invasive. Analysis of the nine audio-recordings suggested that student interactions during such class sessions appeared to be consistent with student interactions during video-taped sessions. In fact, midway through data collection (during the second interview) Mr. Shaw told me he did not notice any differences between class interactions when I was present and when I was not present. Thus, while video-recording classroom interactions represents a limitation for this qualitative research study, by immersing myself in the setting, by obtaining member reflections (Tracy, 2010) on the presence of the video-camera, and, finally, by cross-checking codes that arose during interactions that were video-recorded and those that were audio-recorded all helped minimize such limitations.

A third means of attending to the limitations of the study is through guaranteeing that participation is voluntary and that participants may opt out at any point during the process. The IRB process of obtaining parental consent and student assent is an important step in this process. Making sure participation was voluntary helped to minimize coercion. In addition, I was careful to tell student interviewees that their identities would not be disclosed to the teacher and that all names used in the study would

be self-selected pseudonyms. In addition, in order to check my interpretations of data, I incorporated supervisor debriefing and member checks (both on-the-spot and through reflections). After analyzing student comments made in a particular class session, during conversations or interviews and, at times, via email, I would ask participants to (dis)confirm my interpretations. This strategy was particularly helpful when analyzing Alex's use of sarcasm. For example, when I interpreted a specific comment made by Alex as a sarcastic one, I would ask him if that interpretation was correct and, if so, what he was trying to "do" by using it. Such discussions not only attended to limitations associated with credibility, but also served to thicken and enrich the data. Taken together, each of these methods functioned as a way to build toward credibility and trustworthiness, especially as they attended to multivocality.

Finally, qualitative research studies are usually not purported to be generalizable. Instead, qualitative researchers seek to minimize limitations associated with transferability. In addition to the discussion above, I did this by reporting on the restrictions associated with the type of participation involved, the number of participants, methods I used for collection of data, and the amount and length of the data collection sessions. Finally, I reported the time period during which the study took place.

In order to ensure dependability of the findings, or to develop a deep understanding of the methods I used and the degree to which they were effective, I provided specific details of the design and implementation of the study (see data collection and analysis sections above). In this way, I was able to confirm interpretations by establishing an audit trail of procedures for gathering data (Shenton, 2004).

Critical Reflexivity

In his discussion of critical ethnography, Anderson (1989) noted that critical reflexivity builds on common discussions of reflexivity in that it goes beyond a focus on the relationship between theory and data as well as the implications of the researcher's presence. In particular, he noted that "it involves a dialectical process among: (a) the researcher's constructs; (b) the informants' commonsense constructs; (c) the research data; (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study" (p. 255).

Critical reflexivity has certain concerns it holds in common with other forms of qualitative research. For example, the researcher's position is particularly important, especially when considering the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Attending to the researcher's ideological biases is also important. I acknowledge, for example, that my own socio-historical perspective influences the interpretations I make. As a White male, a member of the middle class, and, thus, member of certain dominant Discourse communities (Gee, 1999), it was imperative that I check my own interpretations with/against the interpretations of the participants (member checks and member reflections in the form of conversations and email exchanges) and with my peers and supervisors, particularly those who may help to illuminate the blind-spots associated with my own biases (Tracy, 2010). For example, throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I checked my understandings with Mr. Shaw and with interview participants. In one particular instance, a transgender student came to class with what appeared to be a typically masculine haircut. This, to me, was a reflection of the

transition through which Shane was going (and which he had described to me when discussing his hormone treatments). Because I interpreted this act from the perspective of a traditional male, I checked my own understanding (and biases) by emailing Shane to ask his interpretation and to determine if my interpretation aligned with his. As a result, I learned that his haircut suggested to him that he was “clean cut with a little bit of an edge.” He clarified by saying, “I don’t like to seem dirty or soft and your hair can say a lot about that.” As a result of the email conversation, my own interpretation of the message his haircut projected was enriched (made more complex) by Shane’s interpretation. This member check, and others like it, allowed me to better understand who students said they were and, thus, the identities they negotiated in relation to their Critical Literacy practices (Holland et al., 2001). Other member checks with the teacher, for example, allowed me to check my personal biases in relation to race and class. In the three interviews (and during numerous conversations) we talked frankly about the role race plays (and has played) in his life and the lives of his students.

In addition to ideological biases, dialectical processes that center on structural and historical forces are one area specific to the critical paradigm. It involves attending to concerns such as the extent to which CCSS influence participants’ (especially in the case of the teacher) interpretations that connect with relations of power. In other words, it may serve to illuminate the degree to which the students’ Critical Literacy practices relate to structural notions of proficiency as measured by (in the case of the tenth grade students) high stakes end of course testing implemented during the 2012-13 school year. It may also serve to illuminate the curricula that teachers are encouraged to use in helping

students attain such proficiencies. For example, in each of the three interviews I conducted with the teacher, Mr. Shaw framed the CCSS as an affordance for his attempts at fostering Critical Literacy practices, but he also framed the pacing guide, which his school district attached to the standards, as a constraint (RQ1). In our first interview, we discussed this very issue. He said, “I think that, overall, the, I don’t want to say pressure, but I guess I make a concerted effort to go along with the pacing guide, the Common Core pacing guide.” In the same interview, when I probed for clarification of his views on the CCSS he made my interpretation more complex by framing the CCSS as an affordance, while framing his county’s pacing guide (which I later learned he helped create) as a constraint. He said, for him, the CCSS is not a constraint. However, “when you have people create curriculum downtown and they create a pacing guide and they make you read Shakespeare, that can be debilitating.” As such, this dialectical process, through which the teacher made complex my interpretations of the role the CCSS plays in his district (and classroom), served to illuminate the structural forces (within the county) at play in his pedagogical decisions.

In addition, Anderson noted that structural and historical considerations also apply to the analytical processes of the research study itself. In my study, the organizational categories themselves were interpreted for the degree to which they may serve to reproduce, or resist, certain social structures, even as they are intended to expose them. Analyzing the organizational categories in comparison to emergent ones served to inform this aspect of critical reflexivity. In other words, emergent categories refined, and, at times, even contradicted, pre-established ones and made for a more nuanced

interpretation. The excerpt above provides an example of such an analysis; emergent codes suggesting that although Mr. Shaw interpreted the CCSS as an affordance for his personal Critical Pedagogy, associated pacing guides set in place by his county served as a constraint. Furthermore, because he helped to create the pacing guides and, thus, because he felt a kind of obligation to use them in his curriculum, the pacing guide served not only as a structural constraint but also as a personal constraint. In sum, while organizational codes aligned with Critical Literacy practices often centered on Mr. Shaw's resistance of a traditional (canonical) curriculum, certain emergent codes associated with affordances and constraints served to reinforce that traditional curriculum.

In sum, as noted in the data analysis discussion above, this study took a qualitative approach. In particular, its design was influenced by ethnographic methodology in that I was immersed in the setting two to three times a week for an entire semester, and, as such, I highlighted the voices of the participants as they interacted with each other and various texts. Discussion of sampling techniques further emphasized this focus in that class observations, interviews, informal conversations, and student work samples further highlighted the ways the sophomore and junior students engaged in Critical Literacy practices as well as how their teacher attempted to foster those engagements. Ultimately, using a nested sampling strategy and selecting intrinsic cases from the subsample during analysis enriched data associated with the unique ways students interacted. While limitations did exist, certain *crystallization* strategies associated with multivocality (Tracy, 2010) were put into place in order to minimize such

limitations. However, in acknowledging that such limitations inevitably persist, I also exercised critical reflexivity (Anderson, 2009) during data collection and analysis. Thus, proceeding from data collection through data analysis in a recursive manner involved constantly checking certain personal biases.

Having established the methodological design of this dissertation study, I now turn to the findings themselves. In particular, I first explore what Mr. Shaw did to foster student literacy practices as well as the ways they aligned with specific Critical Literacy components. Then, I explore how students in each of the two classes engaged in such Critical Literacy practices. Finally, I explore how Alex and Angilé represent two unique, or intrinsic cases (Stake, 1995).

CHAPTER V

RQ1: IN WHAT WAYS DID MR. SHAW FOSTER STUDENT CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES?

This dissertation research study demonstrates how one early career high school English teacher sought to foster Critical Literacy practices within two classes he taught during the 2012-13 school year and the degree to which the students engaged in these practices. In relation to the first research question (*In what ways does the teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in the classroom?*), two salient themes emerged: a) in order to foster critical conversations (Leland et al., 1999; Schieble, 2012), Mr. Shaw used open-ended questions and model texts, drew on personal experiences and popular culture texts, and positioned students as co-learners; and b) in order to foster critical text production (Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2003), he familiarized the students with rhetorical appeals, and used critical conversations in conjunction with multimodal text sets to model how one might take up a critical perspective. While fostering such practices, the teacher drew on his personal Critical Pedagogy as well as teaching practices related to a New Literacy Studies perspective.

In relation to the second research question (*In what ways do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices?*), two salient themes emerged. While student literacy practices aligned with specific Critical Literacy components, students engaged in critical conversations and critical text production by drawing on: a) personal experience; and b) new (digital/online) media texts (Janks, 2010). Thus, in the case of both research

questions, findings are organized according to the two most salient student literacy practices (critical conversations; critical text production).

Over the course of the semester, Mr. Shaw fostered two specific student Critical Literacy practices: critical conversations and critical text production. In order to contextualize how he did this, I begin with a discussion of his personal Critical Pedagogy and New Literacy perspectives. Discussing Mr. Shaw's Critical Pedagogy, especially from where (according to Mr. Shaw) it originated, contributes to understanding how it informs his strategies for fostering student Critical Literacy practices. Because his Critical Pedagogy includes an ideological and broad view of texts, I then discuss his view of what constitutes literacy and its related social practices. Thus, I draw on both Critical Pedagogy and New Literacy perspectives, in part, in order to provide a backdrop for understanding the ways Mr. Shaw fosters these two specific student Critical Literacy practices. In addition to contextualizing Mr. Shaw's teaching practices, discussing his personal Critical Pedagogy and New Literacy perspective informs why and how he fostered such student Critical perspective-taking.

After discussing Mr. Shaw's pedagogy, I explore classroom conversations that aligned with each of four Critical Literacy components: *disruption of the commonplace; analysis of multiple perspectives; focusing on socio-political issues; and taking action to promote social justice* (Lewison et al., 2002). Classroom conversations were on-going and, in his words, "organic." Thus, they formed around multiple Critical Literacy components. I then discuss critical text production by focusing on two specific examples: the TED Talk and the Media Analysis project. Focusing on these two examples

highlights the differences between the critical conversation and critical text production. In the end, organizing discussion of the critical conversation and critical text production in this way served to ensure consistency between data collection, analysis, and subsequent presentation of findings.

Mr. Shaw's Pedagogical Perspectives

Throughout the course of the semester in which I observed Mr. Shaw's two classes, we engaged in three interviews and numerous short conversations during which he discussed, in detail, the nature of his pedagogy, how it originated, and how it got enacted in his teaching practices. By the end of the semester, Mr. Shaw had constructed a vision of his pedagogical perspectives, which was often confirmed during classroom observations (through his teaching practices, his interactions with students, and via student work samples).

Description of Mr. Shaw's Personal Critical Pedagogy

During interviews and conversations, Mr. Shaw described his vision of Critical Pedagogy in two main ways: as being a social justice/critical perspective; and as being, in his words, "organic." In our first introductory meeting (and prior to the semester during which the study took place) he characterized his teaching style as being heavily influenced by Paolo Freire's dialogic method of teaching. Specifically, he noted that one of his goals was to position himself as a co-learner alongside his students. Through such relationships, he hoped to foster their critical perspective-taking so that they, together, might engage in a style of learning that pushed back against the traditional/historical banking model of education (Freire, 1973). During our first formal interview Mr. Shaw

characterized his focus on, and goal for, classroom discussion; in preparing his students for college, he said he wanted them to examine “the construction of racism because that is much more important to our time . . .” He explained that one reason this was so important to him is that, although he did not want them to “believe that, just because you’re Black or just because you’re a woman or just because you’re Hispanic, you have a disadvantage,” he also did not want them to be naïve because “to be naïve, to the per[son], the potential disadvantage is debilitating.” Freire characterized this aspect of Critical Pedagogy as dialogic. Such relationships, rather than simplistic communicative actions between people, are epistemological. In other words, dialogue, in the sense that Freire uses it, is not merely an acknowledgement/valuing of the other, it is also “a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379, as cited in Macedo, 2010, p. 17).

A pedagogy based on this kind of dialogue meant, for Mr. Shaw, that, in addition to his teaching perspective being a critical one, day-to-day classroom interactions were “organic,” which he described to me as “kinds of spontaneous sparks of thinking about how the world affects people and how people affect it.” He further explained in a subsequent email exchange how his teaching style is a kind of natural process during which the students engage in relevant problem-posing learning. He wrote:

I guess what I mean by organic is, natural. I want my classroom experience to mimic real natural inquiry that happens in the real world, not sanitized easy push-the-kids-through learning. To make an analogy, organic farming (at least the way I envision it) is a process of reworking soil that has been conditioned by drought and pesticides, over-work, and lacks nutrient. It involves pulling weeds, getting dirty, starting over, replanting areas of non-growth by hand. In the industrial farming scheme where the goal is simply output and profit there is no time to care

for the soil, weed etc. So we create seeds infused with pesticides for quicker easier production. I don't want my classroom to be industrialized; I want the work to be mentally demanding, but rewarding (and not just based on the mark a student receives for an assignment and the sheer number of assignments that have been turned in). I want the kids to see that the tomato grown through hard work tastes better than the one that was just grown for profit (the grade).

In his email message, Mr. Shaw elaborated on his previous answer that organic teaching involves “spontaneous sparks of thinking . . .” He connected that definition to a kind of learning that is “mentally demanding” and “rewarding.” Specifically, he noted that his pedagogy is oriented toward “process” and involves “natural inquiry.” Using an agricultural analogy, he likened learning in his classroom to organic, rather than industrialized, farming processes. In framing it this way, he noted that he doesn’t “want [his] classroom to be industrialized.” This kind of learning, according to Mr. Shaw, is challenging but also “tastes better than the one grown for profit.” As if to clarify this point, twice during the development of his analogy he contrasted his pedagogy with the “industrialized” classroom via the notion of assessment, or “the grade.” Such a characterization of his pedagogy aligns with a Freirian understanding of a dialogic student-teacher relationship. According to Freire, this kind of relationship disrupts the traditional banking model. In it, the teacher positions her/himself as co-learner—alongside her/his students—in an unrelenting examination (or reading) of the word as students and teacher, together, engage in the “process of becoming” (Freire, 1973, p. 84). As a result, the students and teacher further develop their critical perspectives toward the socially-constructed past (and present). In sum, then, Mr. Shaw characterized his (critical) pedagogy as a process of remaking the world (or “real natural inquiry”). Such a

process pushes back against an historically-constructed banking model of education. Lewison et al. (2002) describe this kind of teacher as an experienced critical educator, one that fosters dialogue, critical perspective-taking, and makes learning more relevant. Morrell (2003) further notes that such critical educators “enact pedagogical practices that enable a bicultural, marginalized opposition to read and act against the interests of power” (p. 3).

Origins and Enactment of Mr. Shaw’s Personal Critical Pedagogy

Just as Mr. Shaw shared with me his personal Critical Pedagogy, he also shared with me various personal experiences from which this perspective originated. Discussing his personal experiences not only served to contextualize his Critical Pedagogy, it also served to contextual his use of those personal experiences as a means to foster student Critical Literacy practices. As he explained, like his students, at various times in his life, he took up a critical perspective and, at other times, he resisted it. For example, during one particular personal conversation that took place between the sophomore and junior class sessions, Mr. Shaw told me that when he was a high school student he was disinterested in discussing racism. He noted that he felt strongly about it, but he:

Wasn’t in an environment that [he] felt those feelings would be accepted, you know, [I] grew up in a small town, you know, only Black kid in a lot of my classes. So you start talking about slavery and stuff, and it was like a spotlight, you know? How does the Black kid feel about racism? . . . it was a whole lot of reflection and a whole lot of denial.

This quote demonstrates how such experiences helped inform Mr. Shaw’s understanding of the complexities associated with teaching from a Critical Pedagogy perspective.

Specifically, one reason he did not always take up a critical perspective had to do with context. Being the “only Black kid” in his classes, he felt as though there was a “spotlight” directed toward him. As he later noted, one goal for him, then, is to “create a space that’s comfortable for [the students] to be able to talk about such things [as racism].” In other words, he wanted to foster an atmosphere (or context) in which certain students, especially those “on the outside of what everybody else is saying, do[n’t] feel like they have to be quiet about it.” Discussing the origins of his critical perspective, then, served to contextualize his Critical Pedagogy perspective. It also served to contextualize his use of personal experiences as a means to foster student Critical Literacy practices.

However, understanding how context influences his and his students’ critical perspective-taking was only one way his personal experience informed his Critical Pedagogy and, thus, his attempts at fostering student critical perspective-taking. The other was understanding how knowledge, or understanding influences his criticality. For example, later in the semester, during a talk he gave to a student teacher seminar class at his university alma mater, Mr. Shaw spoke on the importance of maintaining a critical perspective. In reflecting on his high school experience, he said that as a teenager, he “knew about Gay people” and he “knew that racism existed. But [he believed] all those things were years ago.” He further noted that, “It wasn’t until I got to college that I . . . [saw] how the world really worked.” He explained that his critical perspective did not begin to fully take shape until one particular professor he had in college challenged his thinking by asking him the question, “what do you want your students to become?” The question was, for Mr. Shaw, a profound one. It caused him to consider what kinds of

texts he would ask his students to read and in what ways they might “participate in the world.” As he continued his talk during the student teacher seminar, Mr. Shaw indicated that, paired with his formal college education, he also read Paulo Freire’s work. He said:

I was reading some of his stuff and it really got me thinking about how we teach, the lecture style, and what we have our students doing, and why we have them doing it. Are we simply depositing, or giving them information to regurgitate back to us on tests?

According to Mr. Shaw, then, his formal college experience as well as his informal reading contributed to his current understanding of what constituted a personal Critical Pedagogy. Such contributions caused him to question what some consider one of the most essential components of education. In other words, it caused him to question, in his words, “giving [students] information to regurgitate back to us on tests.” In sum, exploring the nature of Mr. Shaw’s Critical Pedagogy, from which it originated, and its enactment in his teaching practices, within the context of this dissertation study, is particularly important. Doing so helps contextualize his desire for fostering student Critical Literacy practices, especially when exploring the day-to-day pedagogical reflections of specific class sessions. In other words, exploration of the origins of his personal Critical Pedagogy, especially in relation to his (as a high school student) resisting and/or (as a college student) taking up this perspective, suggests that Mr. Shaw’s personal development toward a critical perspective appears to resonate with his current teaching practices. For example, during the same conversation he had with me between the classes I was observing on January 22nd, he connected his personal experiences as a high school student to his current teaching situation and relationship with his students:

Mr. Shaw: . . . I don't know how much of [their participation in classroom conversations] is them simply not being interested and how much of it is their not feeling comfortable enough to really discuss, you know, their true feelings about [race and racism]. It's really easy to be part of the whole and say I don't think there is really any issue with race at all.

Mark: Especially if you're the only Black kid in the class.

Mr. Shaw: Exactly. Exactly . . . it's sometimes hard to gauge whether or not it's just comfort level or if it's, you know, disinterest.

This excerpt shows how his belief that, for the students, it is “easy to be part of the whole and say I don't think there is really any issue with race at all,” resonates with his personal experiences as a high school student who “experienced a whole lot of denial.” In other words, in Mr. Shaw's view, both situations suggest that students take up or resist critical perspectives to varying degrees and for complex reasons. Thus, this resonance between his and the students' personal experiences further served to contextualize both Mr. Shaw's Critical Pedagogy and his use of personal experiences as a means to foster student Critical Literacy practices.

In particular, this example (and others like it) not only provides a personal historical context for his Critical Pedagogy, it also demonstrates that his pedagogy includes active reflection on his teaching practices, what influences those practices, and how those influences might (dis)connect with his students. Such reflection (on his personal experiences) suggests that as an experienced critical educator (Lewison et al., 2002; Morrell, 2003), Mr. Shaw engages in one aspect of what Freire calls praxis. He reflects on his personal experiences associated with race and how those personal experiences relate to his current teaching practices. However, he also engages in another

aspect of praxis—action. In other words, he acts on this reflection in that a central goal for literacy learning in his classroom is to foster student Critical Literacy practices. To make this point more salient, in the class session that followed our conversation on January 22nd, Mr. Shaw began with a free write topic on race and racism. On the whiteboard, he wrote: “Are conversations about race, racism, etc., relevant in 2013?” As students settled into their seats, Mr. Shaw said, “Do you think it’s important to discuss these things with your peers today or are we wasting time?” During the ensuing (critical) conversation, Mr. Shaw explored this question with the students. In doing so, he did what an experienced critical educator does—while positioning his students as co-learners/inquirers, he attempted to engage them in a problem-posing dialogue (Lewison et al., 2002; Morrell, 2003). In fact, posed during the first week of the semester, this question served as an essential question that would frame an entire unit of study on assimilation. Throughout the unit of study, as Mr. Shaw and the students *analyzed multiple viewpoints* related to various attempts at assimilating marginalized groups into American culture, he drew on his Critical Pedagogy to foster student Critical Literacy practices.

Mr. Shaw’s (New) Literacy Perspective

In his day-to-day teaching practices, Mr. Shaw also drew on a wide range of both traditional and new media texts to foster student Critical Literacy practices. Because he did this, it is not only important to explore the nature of his pedagogy, it is also important to explore his conception of literacy. This is important because a broad understanding of literacy that includes anything we do with reading and writing, especially in relation to

multimodalities, widens the context for critical perspective-taking. In other words, it opens new spaces for students to direct their criticality toward systems of meaning that may position certain audiences in marginalizing ways.

For example, one text set Mr. Shaw created for a unit of study on assimilation and immigration included a Native American manifesto, a video documentary, a contemporary American poem, and a full-length feature film. Because each of these texts featured speakers who resisted or disrupted dominant Discourse worldviews, their ideologies were critical in nature (Vasquez et al., 2013). This hearkens to the notion that, while a Critical Literacy perspective focuses student literacy practices toward analyses of texts and the Discourses they represent (Janks, 2010; Luke, 2012), a New Literacies perspective broadens the student literacy practices toward all the things we do with reading and writing (Street, 2003). As such, in this dissertation study, I argue that Critical Literacy practices framework should include a New Literacy perspective, in particular, because employing a broad notion of literacy supports student engagement in the four Critical Literacy components. It also acknowledges the need for pedagogy to support understanding of all texts, not just those that may be privileged. Such an argument is consistent with Mr. Shaw's view of literacy learning.

In exploring, then, the intersection between Mr. Shaw's pedagogy and understanding of literacy learning, I draw on a New Literacy Studies perspective to frame: a) his broad understanding of literacy; b) his ideological understanding of literacy; and c) his technological and relational understanding of literacy.

Understanding Literacy in Broad Terms

At the heart of Mr. Shaw's teaching lay a conception of literacy that includes a broad range of genres and modes. For example, during our first interview, he said that he once told someone he was thinking about teaching "strictly from video" because:

[students] are reading, it's just the definition of literacy is different. I tell people all the time, the kids are goanna read, kids are gonna watch more television and movies and digital media . . . they can consume much more in their lifetime than they will ever read in books.

In this comment, Mr. Shaw not only frames his understanding of literacy to include traditional academic texts found in most American high school English classrooms, he also frames it to include non-traditional and non-print texts. As he elaborated on why he uses video, he explained that asking students to analyze a wide range of multimodal traditional and new media texts "is a much more critical skill for them to develop." This comment suggests that Mr. Shaw's pedagogy centers on the intersection between a critical and broadened notion of literacy; as such, multimodal text sets within units of study often included films, websites, popular music lyrics, and advertisements that explore the constructed nature of knowledge.

Because a broad cultural understanding of literacy also includes all the things we do with language in our day-to-day lives, critical educators like Mr. Shaw, then, may also attempt to foster students' reflection on the constructed nature of knowledge by including new media/popular culture texts (Alvermann et al., 1999; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Janks, 2010) such as those mentioned above. In our first interview, in sharing his goals for the semester, Mr. Shaw echoed this perspective. He said, "I guess one of my

goals is to show them that everything can be taken for an intellectual endeavor, even if it's *World of War Craft*." When I asked him to "explore this a little bit," he explained:

You can choose to be an individual who takes in what you're being given, simply consume it and go on about your day, or you can be a critical viewer . . . It's like, why is it that when there are chicken strip commercials on TV for *Burger King* and there are Black people in the commercials that are singing, why is that? Why are all *Clorox* ads featuring White women? What does *Clorox* represent? Whiteness. Purity. So what kind of messages are they trying to send us through that? . . . So, every single thing.

Thus, it is no surprise that the kinds of popular culture texts Mr. Shaw used to foster Critical Literacy practices included song lyrics, print advertisements, and Internet websites. For example, during a three-week period in which he taught a unit on bias in the media, Mr. Shaw used popular culture texts as the focus of numerous critical conversations. In one day alone, he used two television commercials (accessed via the Internet), two cable news networks' (FOX News and MSNBC) coverage of the Trayvon Martin shooting, and the back of a *Coke* bottle a student brought to class. As such, he fostered a discussion that centered on the constructed nature of knowledge. He framed this conversation as an exercise in recognizing media bias. As such, during the conversation, students used a graphic organizer to identify rhetorical strategies used by the texts' creators and the different kinds of bias found in such texts.

Understanding Literacy in Ideological Terms

Constructing multimodal text sets for exploring the concept of civil disobedience or media bias also suggests Mr. Shaw viewed literacy and its associated practices in ideological rather than autonomous terms (Street, 2005). As noted in the theoretical

framework, literacy in this sense is rooted in competing worldviews and, thus, never comes to us as autonomous, or ideologically neutral. As such, it connects with a critical perspective that seeks to *disrupt the commonplace, analyze multiple viewpoints, focus on sociopolitical issues, and/or take action and promote social justice* (Lewison et al., 2002). Indeed, in Mr. Shaw's classroom, no text was viewed as neutral, even those he used as models for critical perspective-taking. While teaching the unit of study centered on civil disobedience, for example, Mr. Shaw facilitated a discussion about a music video featuring a song by Egyptian artist Muhammed Munir. Through the song, Munir provided a statement of protest against the Egyptian government. In discussing its ideological nature, Mr. Shaw connected the genre (song) to the social media through which it got disseminated. He said:

These are songs that he actually used during the protests. And you guys know how social media works. Somebody could put up a song tomorrow, today. This afternoon people are already listening to it, know the words by the next day, like the Harlem Shake . . . They blow up, they go crazy.

Then he posed a question that demonstrates how, when put into practice, a New Literacies perspective might enrich a definition of Critical Literacy. He asked, "Why would music be simply an effective way of getting a message across to an audience?" In response, Young Esquire III noted, "The beat or the music first catches the person's attention and then they start listening to the words and . . . get the message." To follow, Mr. Shaw shared another music video by Marvin Gaye, called *What's Goin' On*. After playing the video and discussing with the students the lines that make the song a protest, he said, "Mr. Gaye writes about all these things in five stanzas . . . people are embracing

this anti-establishment idea.” As this classroom exchange demonstrates, Mr. Shaw not only viewed literacy broadly enough to include new media/popular culture texts, in framing the texts as protest songs he also viewed them as ideological in nature. Furthermore, he helped students understand the role popular/new media play in their dissemination. From a New Literacies perspective, this is an important teaching practice, because the media through which we interact with others are rapidly expanding and, as such, so have our definitions of what constitutes literacy (Janks, 2010; Luke & Dooley, 2011). If teachers who foster Critical Literacy practices that align with such an expansion wish to make the ideological nature of literacy relevant to the students they teach, then they must continue to draw on texts that are not limited to traditional (canonical) genres and modes (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005). Ultimately, because Mr. Shaw treats literacy as ideological and, because he highlights the voices in those texts that resist, or speak back, to dominant Discourse worldviews, his teaching practices reflect an interdisciplinary understanding of Critical Literacy practices, one that includes a New Literacies perspective. Such a perspective argues that in taking a Critical Literacy practices approach one must also have a broad understanding of literacy.

Understanding Literacy in Technological and Relational Terms

In attempting to make such literacy learning relevant to their students, New and Critical Literacy teachers not only take on a broad and ideological understanding of literacy, they also conceive of literacy in both a technological and relational sense. This means they not only include digital/online media for classroom analysis, they also take into consideration the social and cultural relations associated with the literacy practices

they wish to foster (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009). As noted in the theoretical framework of this dissertation study, the concept of literacy practices used here refers to what we do with reading and writing within cultural contexts and, thus, includes social relations (Street, 2003). In this sense, then, for teachers who foster New and Critical Literacy practices, literacy learning is related to more than just a change in behavior, it also includes an exploration of our social practices (Gee & Hayes, 2011). It involves creating a space to discuss and produce the kinds of texts that, as Mr. Shaw noted, will be relevant to students' "day-to-day life." According to Mr. Shaw, texts that explore "gender will, race will, sexuality will [be relevant]." Thus, when teaching from this perspective Mr. Shaw not only encourages students to analyze how a text gets constructed, he fosters student analysis of the sociocultural contexts for such text construction - including the potential motives for their construction and/or whose interests it might serve. During numerous class sessions, for example, Mr. Shaw emphasized the degree to which a text's audiences get positioned in multiple and, at times, marginalizing ways. In doing so, he attempted to foster student exploration of how this might affect their (and others') lives.

For Mr. Shaw, then, what his students did with reading and writing within the classroom (their literacy practices) were most meaningful when their practices were relevant to their personal lives. He said, if he "can create a space that's comfortable for [his students] . . . they feel like it's easier to say, for example, 'Oh, yeah, I'm Gay and this is how it has affected me.'"

In sum, then, Mr. Shaw understands literacy and its attendant practices in broad ideological terms, as well as in a relational, cultural sense. While drawing on this New

Literacies notion of reading and writing, he also drew on a personal Critical Pedagogy that most often highlighted those whose voices are marginalized, a pedagogy that is, in his words, “organic” in nature. This Critical Pedagogy, as described above, derived from personal experiences as a student in high school and college. Given this perspective, it is clear that Mr. Shaw’s pedagogy is, perhaps, best understood through an interdisciplinary approach between Critical and New Literacies perspectives. This is especially true in considering the ways he attempts to foster literacy practices that align with core components of Critical Literacy: *disruption of the commonplace, analysis of multiple viewpoints, focus on sociopolitical issues*, and, ultimately, *taking action and promoting social justice* (Freire, 1973; Lewison et al., 2002). As such, I turn to the two most salient ways Mr. Shaw attempted to foster Critical Literacy practices: the critical conversation and critical text production.

Critical Conversations

Perhaps the most salient theme associated with the first research question focuses on numerous critical conversations I observed when visiting Mr. Shaw’s classroom. As Ira Shor (1999) notes, taking a critical stance means “questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just, or humane” (par. 1). Applying this stance to classroom interactions means that critical conversations foster students’ understanding of the constructed nature of meaning, as well as their understanding of how relations of power affect both individuals and groups. Such interactions foster students’ exploration of beliefs about what is fair and just and, ultimately, serve as a mode through which participants might ask Critical Literacy questions such as: whose

voices are privileged and whose are not? (Leland et al., 1999; Lewison et al., 2002; Schieble, 2012). Thus, within the context of this study, the term critical conversation is operationalized to mean a social interaction during which participants explore issues related to Critical Literacy. Ultimately, such a definition is consistent with Mr. Shaw's literacy learning perspective as described above. Because they aligned with the four Critical Literacy components noted by Lewison et al. (2002), the conversations he fostered served as a kind of Critical Literacy practice.

It should be noted here that critical conversations varied (sometimes drastically) in their duration. For example, while Mr. Shaw conducted only four Paideia-style seminars, those seminars lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. On the other hand, critical conversations stemming from in-class free writes lasted between just a few minutes to as many as 45. Thus, while a total count of critical conversations served to quantify their occurrence, the more nuanced approach of analyzing the content of specific conversations served to contextualize them. As such, I first organize the conversations according the four Critical Literacy categorical codes, or components: *disrupting the commonplace*, *analyzing multiple viewpoints*, *focusing on sociocultural issues*, and *reflecting and acting on the world* (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013). Within each of these components, I further organize the conversations into the five emergent codes noted below. I did this in order to identify themes that arose from both anticipated and unanticipated data. Such themes focused on the specific ways Mr. Shaw fostered student Critical Literacy practices. Finally, within this categorizing scheme, I discuss instances in which Mr. Shaw's New and Critical Pedagogy perspective contributes to his attempts

at fostering student Critical Literacy practices. Doing so allowed me to contextualize such attempts as part of his personal pedagogy. In sum, on many occasions, Mr. Shaw attempted to foster critical conversations by: (a) positioning students as co-learners; (b) using open-ended questions; (c) drawing on his and the students' personal experiences; (d) using, often multimodal, model texts (and text sets); and (e) using popular culture references.

Disrupting the Commonplace

On numerous occasions Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations during which he encouraged students to question, or *disrupt, the commonplace*. In total, between the two classes I observed, conversations got coded within this Critical Literacy component 27 times. In his attempts to foster conversations that aligned with this particular component, Mr. Shaw fore-fronted student voices and, thus, positioned them as co-learners. In doing so, he and his students drew on their personal experiences to “unpack social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces” (Vasquez et al., 2013) and to ask how do texts (and the systems of meaning they convey) position their audiences as well as whose culture gets defined as commonsense (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013)?

Positioning students as co-learners. Of the class sessions I observed, one particular sophomore session early in the semester (January 15) demonstrates how, during conversations, Mr. Shaw fore-fronted student voices and, thus, positioned the students as co-learners. Data analysis indicated that for the sophomore class alone, Mr. Shaw positioned students in this way during at least 23 different class sessions. Such numbers are important to note; in particular, they indicate conversations of this sort were

part of a consistent practice that occurred throughout the semester. As such, positioning students as co-learners repeatedly over the course of the semester may have had a cumulous impact beyond the January 15 class session. Because one goal of the conversation, according to Mr. Shaw, is for the teacher to take on the role of facilitator, to begin the class session, he asked the students to imagine that he's "not here," that they should go so far as to not even look at him, especially when responding to fellow participants. In fact, Mr. Shaw told the students that he was deliberately positioning himself (physically) outside of the conversation circle.

Additionally, in explaining the procedures to the students, he noted that, "no one is wrong, it is just an equal sharing of ideas." Because of this, he noted, students should "keep an open mind . . . speak out of uncertainty . . . and focus on what the [text] means to you." Thus, in beginning the conversation with what he calls "ground rules" for participation, he positioned the students (relationally) as the ones who control the direction of the "spontaneous" discussion. By focusing the discussion on what the text "means to the [students]," the students would determine what significance, if any, it might have. As such, because the students, rather than Mr. Shaw, interpreted the text, they led a discussion that *disrupted commonplace* initiation-response-evaluation (I-R-E) notions of classroom interaction. For example, while various students appeared to take up the position of discussion director, one segment of the discussion particularly demonstrates how this occurred. The segment began midway through the discussion and was initiated with a question from Reagan directed toward Echo:

Reagan: Echo, how do you feel [about the poem]?

Echo: About what?

Young Esquire III: Anything.

Alex: About life.

Echo: This is about the poem.

Young Esquire III: Who do you think the poem is addressed to? Who do you think the audience is?

Echo: Everyone, it doesn't matter if you're Black, White, whatever you are, you still deserve the same thing as everybody.

Alex: But what if you're not American?

Echo: Same thing.

Young Esquire III: Is it really?

Alex: But [the poet] makes the point [Alex points to text], we're all connected because we're American.

Echo: But the point is, if we're different, at the end we're still gonna be the same thing.

Because Mr. Shaw sat outside the discussion circle and remained silent while several students directed the conversation, this reflected his desire to create a dialogic atmosphere in his classroom, one that positions students as co-learners rather than empty vessels into which the teacher may deposit knowledge (Freire, 1973). In particular, Reagan, Alex, and Young Esquire III each encouraged Echo to participate. As a result, he interpreted the message of the poem, one that emphasizes unity, regardless of whether we are "Black, White, whatever [we] are, [we] still deserve the same thing as everybody." Berhman (2006) notes that such positionings, whether physical or relational,

are consistent with Critical Literacy/Pedagogy perspectives that seek to flatten hierarchical classroom interactions. Even though such classroom power structures remain intact (Giroux, 2000), within the context of this critical conversation, Mr. Shaw provided opportunities or what Vasquez et al. (2013) term “curriculum openings” (p. 76) for temporarily negotiating that traditional power structure. In such instances, they note, teachers (or, in this case, fellow classmates) might support a student’s critical perspective-taking. As such, because it served as an example of how Mr. Shaw fore-fronted student voices and, thus, positioned them as co-learners, the January 15th discussion demonstrates how such conversations aligned with a Critical Literacy component—*disruption of the commonplace*.

In this sense, the disruption was not so much directed toward a text. Rather it was directed toward traditional notions of classroom interactions. Although this particular seminar example may seem to align more closely with the second research question (*In what ways do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices?*), it should be noted that, because the teacher’s ground rules involve positioning himself as facilitator rather than leader of the discussion, during this discussion (as well as the 22 others I noted in the sophomore coding chart) it was the students who directed the conversation. Constructing the discussion in this way, thus, stands in contrast with the traditional I-R-E sequence of interactions commonly found in classrooms where the banking model prevails (Freire, 1973; Juzwik, 2006). As such, using conversation ground rules served to foster student engagement in critical conversations that often disrupted “assumptions

(often stereotypes) being made about how the world operates” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 52).

Using traditional texts as models. A second way that Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations during which students *disrupted the commonplace* was by centering the discussion on a traditional text that modeled this particular Critical Literacy component, in particular, as a kind of counternarrative (Giroux et al., 1996). In total, Mr. Shaw did this during 13 different sophomore class sessions and 14 different junior class sessions. In the January 15th example discussed above, Mr. Shaw and his students focused on two poems by Langston Hughes. In one poem, titled *Let America Be America Again*, Hughes challenges the idea that America is for all “a land where Liberty / is crowned with no false wreath, / But opportunity is real, and life is free, / Equality is in the air we breathe.” By centering the seminar on this particular poem, then, Mr. Shaw included a model text that articulated the idea that knowledge is historically constructed.

As the students read and analyzed the poem, like Hughes, they questioned the taken-for-granted notions of what America represents. For example, after Reagan noted that the most important line in the poem is “equality is in the air we breathe,” she argued, “equality is something we shouldn’t have to, like, think about giving people, or not giving people, but like everyone having, like it should be natural.” In this instance, Reagan argued, like Hughes, that equality should not be given. Rather, it should be, in her words, “natural.” The first Hughes poem, thus, modeled how one might push back against commonsense notions of freedom through a counternarrative that “talks back to the original problematic [discourse]” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 59). Including such texts

is particularly important for those students whose personal experiences do not align with dominant Discourse worldviews of freedom. It suggests that there are alternate, even contradictory, understandings of freedom. This point is important in understanding how Mr. Shaw fostered student critical perspective-taking. In his words “having [the students] think critically about how the world is shaped” provides a space where “they can help to reshape it and really have an opinion about it.”

Drawing on personal experiences. As such, a third way Mr. Shaw fostered student literacy practices that aligned with *disrupting the commonplace* was by providing a space in which students might draw on their personal experiences. In total, he did this during 10 different sophomore class sessions and 8 different junior class sessions. While reading and analyzing each of the two poems, like Hughes, the students referred to their own personal experiences as a way to question the taken-for-granted notions of what America represents. Thus, as noted above, the critical focus of the conversation was directed toward those forces in American society that motivated Hughes to construct the poems as a kind of counternarrative. For example, at one point in the conversation, Alex, rather than Mr. Shaw, asked Echo what he thought about the poem, *Let America Be America Again*. After a five-second pause, Maria, (and then Echo) referred to a specific line (“*America was never America for me*”) by relating the line to each of their family’s experiences in immigrating from India (Maria) and Palestine (Echo):

Maria: Because people, they come here, like for example, my grandparents came here, they’re old, and they came here. [Americans] think it’s easy here, like you have it all set out for you, but when you actually come here, it’s not that easy. You have to work your butt off just to get, just to feed your family and stuff. And then, and then like coming here and you work, it takes forever just to get where

you want to get. So you have to really work hard and it's just not easy, it doesn't come easy.

Echo: I can also relate to what Maria was saying because my dad came here and tried to get a job. He came here expecting, you know, more money and an easier life, but he didn't know much English . . . we should change America to be exactly what everyone thinks it should be, a dream to come and relax and do whatever you want basically, well not whatever you want . . .

In this particular excerpt, both Maria and Echo aligned with the poet in questioning the commonsense notion that America is, especially for immigrants, a land where anyone can get ahead. In saying, “[Americans] think it's easy here, like you have it all set out for you, but when you come here it's not that easy,” Maria pushed back against what she appeared to interpret as the commonsense notion that, in America, life is easy. Instead, “you have to work your butt off . . . just to feed your family.” Echo, then, carried this notion a step further. In his comment, despite its brevity, he referenced his own personal history and called for action. He said, “We should change America to be exactly what everyone thinks it should be, a dream to come and relax . . .” This brief exchange demonstrates that, similar to Hughes, two students drew on personal experience to *disrupt commonplace* notions that freedom means the same for all.

As noted above, during this class session, Mr. Shaw positioned students as co-learners by providing ground rules for participation. For example, he asked students to direct their questions and comments toward each other. As such, the students, rather than Mr. Shaw acted as discussion directors who asked open-ended questions (e.g., “how do you feel [about the poem?]). In this case, however, Mr. Shaw's class discussion procedures opened a space in which Maria and Echo drew on personal experiences to

disrupt the commonplace. These opportunities are important for teachers to provide because, as Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) note, they open spaces where “curricular relevance for students” (p. 39) may become more salient. In this case, such relevance is demonstrated in the ways both Echo and Maria related the traditional model text their own life experiences.

Despite its relevance, it should be noted that Maria and Echo’s perspectives did not go beyond aligning with commonsense understandings of America. While Echo’s call to action emphasizes this notion, it also highlights a missed opportunity for the students to explore ways they might, in Echo’s words, “change America to be exactly what everyone thinks it should be.” Thus, the example suggests that, while Mr. Shaw did open a space where students might draw on personal experience to *disrupt the commonplace*, the discussion was constrained in that the degree to which the students explored how they might heed Echo’s call to action was limited.

Use of open-ended questions. A fourth way Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations in which the students *disrupted the commonplace* was by using open-ended questions (total of 10 sophomore class sessions and 11 junior class sessions). In the classroom discussion of the Hughes poems, Mr. Shaw paired this strategy with positioning students as co-learners. Doing so suggests that each of the five strategies Mr. Shaw used to foster critical conversations, at times, did not occur in isolation. For example, while discussing the poem *I, Too, Sing America*, Mr. Shaw’s first series of questions positioned the students, rather than the teacher, as those who would determine “the most important word or line in the poem,” as well as “why [it is] the most

important,” and finally “what is true for the speaker.” In response, several students discussed their opinions about the speakers’ interpretation of truth. However, when Jax turned to Mr. Shaw (who was sitting outside the circle) to provide his opinion, Mr. Shaw gestured toward the rest of the participants, indicating that Jax should direct his answer toward his fellow classmates, rather than toward the teacher. As if to further reinforce this notion, immediately after Jax commented, when Young Esquire III asked Mr. Shaw a question about the poem, Mr. Shaw responded by saying, “Ask the group, not me.” As evidenced by the interaction that followed, redirecting Jax and Young Esquire III functioned to disrupt the traditional I-R-E format for classroom interactions.

As Young Esquire III turned to his classmates, several students offered answers. In fact, when Caelyn answered, Alex appeared to take up an active position of discussion director, a position, which in an I-R-E, or banking model, of classroom interaction is often reserved for the teacher (Juzwik, 2006). In an authoritative tone, he responded by asking Caelyn to “speak up.” To make this point more salient, Alex later asked essentially the same kinds of open-ended questions his teacher might ask; for example, when Young Esquire III provided his explanation of “what is true” for the poet, Alex asked, “Now why is that true?” In sum, then, this example demonstrates that asking open-ended questions in conjunction with positioning students as co-learners not only served to disrupt traditional notions of teacher and student roles it also fostered critical conversations in which students *disrupted the commonsense*.

This kind of critical perspective-taking is also evident in other conversations fostered by Mr. Shaw. In other words, each individual strategy did not occur

independently of the other strategies. For example, in a Paideia-style seminar conducted with his junior class on February fourth, Mr. Shaw fostered a discussion in which students aligned with a text's creator to *disrupt the commonplace*. However, whereas the sophomore example discussed above demonstrates how students drew on personal experience to engage critically, the junior excerpt demonstrates that when engaged in the conversations, some students not only aligned their opinions with the creator of the model text, at times they began to question essential notions associated with the pursuit of the American Dream. In the opening question, Mr. Shaw focused on the main argument in a speech given by Booker T. Washington: "Should an oppressed people when faced with the possibility of freedom, accept second class citizenship, i.e. perhaps limited access to education, jobs resources, or demand full-fledged rights?" After he provided the ground rules for answering the initial question, similar to the January 15th sophomore example, Mr. Shaw positioned students as co-learners. He said, "Speak to each other, do not talk to me. If you speak to me I will look down at my paper. I will not look at you. You're talking to each other not me." As a result, during a five-minute period, Mr. Shaw only spoke when asking open-ended or clarifying questions. These pedagogic decisions, in the end, fostered a conversation during which, students in general, agreed with Booker T. Washington's speech, which suggests that those who are oppressed should not accept second-class citizenship. As such, similar to the Hughes poems, Washington's speech served as a model for how one might take up a critical perspective; indeed, several students pushed back explicitly against the commonsense notion that success is a result of hard work:

Alesha: I feel like the ones at the top will complain more than the ones that's gonna be at the bottom. Cause they really didn't have to work to get to where they were. It was just handed to them. And the ones at the bottom basically had to work most of their lives to get to the top.

Young Esquire III: Or they both complain, cause at the top be like you have it all so like they can't gain anything so they just complain cause they're lazy.

Nunu: So they really don't know what complaining is. Technically.

This example demonstrates that Mr. Shaw used multiple strategies (positioning students as co-learners; asking open-ended questions) to foster critical conversations in which the juniors *disrupted the commonplace*. In this exchange, Alesha (accompanied by Young Esquire III and Nunu) challenged the commonsense notion that through hard work one can attain a higher position in society. As she reflected on the “ones at the top,” she said, “they really didn't have to work to get where they are.”

In sum, during critical conversations with both classes, Mr. Shaw positioned himself as secondary to the students and their discussion and, thus, positioned them as co-learners, not only in a physical sense but also in a relational one. He did this by forefronting student voices. In the January 15th sophomore example, he fostered a critical conversation in which the students (aligned with Langston Hughes) drew on their personal experiences to *disrupt the commonplace* in American society. In the February 4th junior example, he fostered a critical conversation in which students (aligned with Booker T. Washington) questioned the most essential notions of what it means to be American, that through hard work one may rise to the top. In both examples, Mr. Shaw used multiple strategies simultaneously to create a space where students might *disrupt commonplace* notions associated with traditional I-R-E student-teacher interactions.

It is important to note that in each of these instances, Mr. Shaw's personal Critical Pedagogy theory got enacted as part of his practice. As noted in the introduction to this findings section, Mr. Shaw believes that classroom interaction should follow a dialogic rather than banking model of education. As he interpreted it, Critical Pedagogy meant positioning students as knowledgeable contributors to critical conversations. For example, during his visit to the student teacher seminar at his alma mater, when explaining how Paulo Freire's (1973) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, influenced his teaching, he posed a question, "Are we allowing [students] to be participants in the world?" and then responded, "I often feel like we don't give teenagers enough credit. They do think, even though you may just hear them talking about what they saw on [a television show]." Comments like these, when paired with critical conversations such as the ones held on January 15 and February 4, suggest that Mr. Shaw's personal Critical Pedagogy both in theory and practice, at times, afforded, and other times constrained, his attempts at fostering student participation in critical conversations. As noted in this discussion, positioning students as co-learners often fostered critical conversations in which they *disrupted the commonplace*. However, in positioning himself as secondary audience, or outside of the conversation, opportunities to further foster student critical perspective-taking may, at times, have been missed. Echo's call to "change America" serves as a case in point.

Analysis of Multiple Viewpoints

In addition to fostering critical conversations in which students *disrupt the taken for granted*, Mr. Shaw also encouraged students to consider how others might interpret

the world from perspectives that are different than their own. In the theoretical framework chapter, I noted that literacy teachers, in particular, might attend to this aspect of Critical Literacy by focusing on perspective or point of view. In other words, they may ask their students to consider how a text can be read from, or against, certain perspectives and what meanings might be drawn from doing so. An inclusive emphasis, then, might consist of such Critical Literacy practices as writing counternarratives (Behrman, 2006; Lewison et al., 2002). This is particularly important for critical educators like Mr. Shaw, whose classes are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation (see Appendix B).

In total, of the class sessions I observed, 28 got coded as instances in which Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering critical conversations included *analyses of multiple viewpoints*. Mr. Shaw fostered such Critical Literacy practices by: 1) asking open-ended questions; 2) positioning his students as discussion directors; 3) drawing on multimodal texts and text sets; and 4) drawing on popular culture media and texts.

Use of open-ended questions. As noted above, in certain situations Mr. Shaw's use of the open-ended question fostered conversations in which students *disrupted the commonplace*. However, during such conversations, students also *analyzed multiple worldviews* (sophomores - nine class sessions; juniors - eight class sessions). In other words, while they questioned, at times, taken-for-granted-notions that all of America enjoys freedom equally, at other times they focused on those whose voices are marginalized and, thus, *analyzed multiple worldviews*. Such instances were often fostered by Mr. Shaw's use of specific free-write open-ended questions. For example,

during a March 12th sophomore class session, in responding to the questions, “What messages does society send young people about how they should behave as men or women? Who has it worse?,” Maria and Alex *analyzed multiple and contradictory perspectives*:

Maria: I feel like religion would play a part in [societal messages about gender] too, because I have a friend and she’s Muslim and like she goes to State University right now and she’s majoring in Psychology. After she gets married she’s not allowed to work. So, I mean like, I don’t see, obviously I don’t see the point of her going . . . maybe, yes I do, I don’t know why she’s majoring in Psychology. She’s not gonna be able to work, which is what women are not supposed to do. Some people say women shouldn’t work, they should stay at home, clean, take care of the kids, and men should work and provide for their home.

Alex: I think women should work.

Mr. Shaw: [begins writing on the board a two-sided table. On the left side is the word “women,” on the right is the word “men”] Ok, we’re starting to establish a cultural norm I want to keep track of. Ok, so you have women and men and the key word is expectation [writes the word “expectation” on the top right above table]. Maria said women’s expectations are . . .

Maria: . . . NOT work, take care of the kids, clean.

Alex: My dad is a stay at home dad. But he’s crippled, so, it doesn’t count that much does it?

In this brief exchange, as the two students negotiated their understandings of society’s expectations for women, Maria reflected on a friend’s personal experience as a Muslim college student by acknowledging what appears to her to be a contradiction. On the one hand, according to Maria, the traditional (cultural) Muslim expectation is for women to stay at home, but on the other hand, her friend has decided to attend a university. Given the societal context of an American (mostly) Christian society, Maria *analyzed multiple*

perspectives, including her own (“I don’t see the point of her going . . . maybe, yes I do”). To complicate matters, Alex presented his personal experience as a contradictory perspective (“My dad is a stay-at-home dad”), one that does not align with the cultural expectations presented by Maria (“Some people say women shouldn’t work”). To mediate, and perhaps extend the conversation to include other students, Mr. Shaw summarized the complexity of the exchange and referred back to the free-write prompt, “So we have some outside social pressure, but we also have religion dictating some of that in some cases . . . what messages is society sending young men and young women about how they should behave?”

This final move, to return to the prompt, emphasizes Mr. Shaw’s persistence in using the open-ended question as a means to foster student critical conversations, especially those during which students *analyze multiple viewpoints*. It also, however, may signal a limitation associated with such conversations. In particular, asking open-ended questions did not always result in full student participation. Whereas Maria and Alex’s interaction demonstrated how initial free-write open-ended questions might, for some students, function to foster critical perspective-taking, engaging all students requires persistence. In fact, before Mr. Shaw asked this question, only four of the students had participated in the conversation. Afterward, an additional three students entered the conversation, and, in the end, after asking a third open-ended question, nine of the 11 students had voiced and/or analyzed a particular perspective toward traditional gender roles.

In addition to noting that some students initially resisted responding to open-ended questions, for some who did engage in critical perspective-taking, their engagement was limited to considering few perspectives. During those moments, Mr. Shaw intervened in the conversation to suggest alternative viewpoints. For example, at one point in the conversation, although nearly all students had contributed, Mr. Shaw asked a series of questions that centered on the students' personal experiences with multiple potentially conflicting perspectives:

So, what does your grandma's generation think about how men should act? How does your parents think about how young men and women should act? How does TV create a narrative about how men and women should act? How do magazines do that? How do commercials? How does music? How does anything that is influential in your life? What do those influential pieces tell you about what it is to be a man and what it is to be a woman?

In response to these questions, Reagan, who had not yet participated, presented an additional perspective toward gender roles, one that focused on her beliefs about double standards associated with promiscuity. In response to Mr. Shaw, she said, "Like, if guys sleep around it's power to you. But if girls sleep around, then they're whores." While her answer did not fully explore the source (beyond society at large) of this additional perspective, Reagan did introduce another perspective toward gender role expectations. As such, Caelyn, Young Esquire III, and Echo, all contributed to the analysis of such expectations. As Mr. Shaw explained in our final interview, he "want[ed students] to sort of flesh out how they feel, and share, and sometimes conflict, and come to resolutions, and those types of things through the conversation." In this instance, when students first did not appear to fully engage in "flesh[ing] out how they feel," Mr. Shaw

persisted in asking open-ended questions that centered on the students' personal experiences.

This persistence is particularly important to note. On the one hand, it suggests that not all critical conversations involved full participation or full engagement with specific Critical Literacy components. On the other, it suggests that Mr. Shaw appeared to recognize this and, at times, his persistence fostered greater and richer student engagement. In the end, such variance in the amount and degree of participation emphasizes the importance of fostering critical conversations over extended periods of time and in numerous ways. This point, thus, further highlights what Mr. Shaw, an experienced critical educator (Lewison et al., 2002; Morrell, 2003) does to foster student critical perspective-taking.

Positioning students as co-learners. In the discussion above centered on the January 15th sophomore class session, I noted that when Mr. Shaw positioned students as co-learners the traditional I-R-E structure of classroom interaction got disrupted. Specifically, during that critical conversation, certain students took up a position as discussion director. However, the same example demonstrates how positioning students in this way, might also foster conversations in which student *analyze multiple viewpoints*. Furthermore, as the January 15th example demonstrates, in such instances, like Mr. Shaw, the students asked open-ended questions. This is an important point to make, because it further suggests, while certain pedagogic moves worked simultaneously to align conversations with multiple Critical Literacy components (e.g., *disruption of the commonplace; analysis of multiple perspectives*), such moves also demonstrate how

positioning certain students as co-learners fostered classroom interactions in which they, rather than Mr. Shaw, decided which direction the conversation might take.

As noted in the January 15th discussion, when Young Esquire III shared the line he felt was most important in the Langston Hughes poem, Mr. Shaw gestured toward his classmates to indicate that Young Esquire III should direct his answer away from the teacher. In fact, after doing this Mr. Shaw said, “don’t look at me,” and turned his chair so that he no longer faced the participants. Through this gesture and directive, Mr. Shaw positioned himself (both physically and relationally) as secondary audience. As if in response to this move, when Echo stated that he agreed with Young Esquire III’s interpretation, Young Esquire III appeared to take up the position of discussion director and, thus, as Mr. Shaw had previously done, began to ask the open-ended questions. He asked of Echo, why he believes “we’re still gonna be the same thing,” in other words, why we all deserve the same freedoms. After 10 seconds of silence, and after Alex attempted to prompt Echo (and, thus, temporarily take the lead), Young Esquire III asked of the entire group, “does anybody else want to share?” This example demonstrates how two students, Young Esquire III and Alex, asked the open-ended questions (positioned as discussion directors) and, thus, for the moment, instead of their teacher, fostered the critical conversation.

In discussing the January 15th example above, I noted that such actions are important because they demonstrate how a critical educator might position students as co-learners. However, the way certain students responded when their peers positioned as discussion directors is also important. In particular, their responses demonstrate that, in

such situations, classroom interaction not only *disrupted the commonplace*, they also demonstrate that, while participating in such conversations, students *analyzed multiple viewpoints*. For example, in her response to Young Esquire III, Reagan made a distinction between the two voices in the Hughes poems; she suggested that, in one poem (*I, Too, Sing America*) “[Hughes] describes himself and everything, but in the second one it’s more like everyone, kind of like in everyone’s head, like omniscient, I think.” Thus, she compared the speaker’s perspective in one poem (individually-oriented) to his perspective in the other (socially-oriented). This distinction demonstrates how Reagan, in response to Young Esquire III’s invitation, focused on how someone might speak back to dominant Discourse understandings of the American experience. In other words, in focusing on someone “whose voice has been . . . marginalized” (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383) she analyzed a contradictory perspective. Additionally, in providing his answer for why he chose a particular passage, Alex also analyzed Hughes’s perspective. He said, “So, in other words, the point is that America should be equal, despite the fact that [those who claim] it is equal [are] not accurate.” In his comment, like Reagan, Alex analyzed a contradictory perspective. However, in suggesting that taken-for-granted assumptions of equality “are [in]accurate” he also *disrupted the commonplace*.

In the end, the move on Mr. Shaw’s part to use “ground rules” provided a space where certain students took up the position of discussion director. In this instance, Mr. Shaw did this in both physical and relational ways. Physically, he sat outside the primary audience circle. Relationally, he deflected students’ comments back toward their classmates. As such, certain students, rather than their teacher, asked open-ended

questions that further fostered a critical conversation in which they and their classmates *disrupted the commonplace* and *analyzed a contradictory perspective*.

It should be noted, however, that such physical and relational positionings occurred in additional ways over the course of the semester. For example, during certain class sessions, while Mr. Shaw sat at various students' tables, individual students sat at Mr. Shaw's desk (where they often directed conversations). During these class sessions, such student discussion directors not only used open-ended questions to prompt participation, they also, at times, accessed online resources to aid in extending or redirecting the conversation. In one particular critical conversation, for example, Maybell sat at Mr. Shaw's desk and, in order to share how gender roles are reproduced in children's toys, conducted an online image search of stereotypical *Lego* characters.

Other examples of how Mr. Shaw positioned students relationally as co-learners included drawing on shared interests and common experiences. According to Mr. Shaw his goal in doing this is to demonstrate "how participation in such discussions are relevant to [the students]." Because of this, from the very beginning of the semester, he involved students in activities that build community. For example, during a unit of study focused on the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, he used a popular board game (Monopoly) to demonstrate how money/poverty functions as a barrier to achieving the American Dream. Altering the rules so that students would begin game play at different times demonstrated how economic disparities are constructed historically and systemically. Because they entered the game at different points, in relation to wealth distribution, each group member took up different simulated perspectives and, thus, *analyzed multiple viewpoints*

associated with socioeconomics. However, as students played the game in groups they engaged in small talk related to their interests and common experiences. As such, the activity functioned in two ways: One, because students discussed with each other the “fairness” of their simulated economic positions, together they directed their conversations and, thus, positioned as co-learners. Two, such conversations not only emphasized the nature of economic barriers associated with attaining the American Dream, it also provided an opportunity to build community. While students took turns directing their small group conversations, they shared anecdotes related to their day-to-day experiences. In sum, these examples demonstrate that, in order to foster student participation in critical conversations, Mr. Shaw positioned students physically and relationally as co-learners. As such, during the conversations, students often engaged with others in *disrupting the commonplace* and in *analyzing multiple perspectives*.

Use of multimodal texts. In addition to Mr. Shaw’s use of open-ended questions and positioning the students as co-learners, a third way he fostered student critical conversations was by including multimodal texts focused on specific social justice issues (sophomores - 13 times; juniors - 14 times). As noted above, the inclusion of multimodal texts and text sets may aid in fostering critical conversations in a multiliterate classroom (Vasquez et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that, whereas the discussion related to *disruption of the commonplace* featured single traditional texts, in this case Mr. Shaw used both multimodal traditional and new media text sets. Furthermore, such usage fostered conversations that aligned with another specific Critical Literacy component: *analysis of multiple viewpoints*. This point is important when considering the

diversification of our nation's (including Mr. Shaw's) classrooms and, thus, their increasingly multiliterate nature (New London Group, 1996). In particular, it provides opportunities to analyze multiple and potentially contradictory perspectives. This is because using multimodal text sets broadens the perspectives with which students might interact; such sets model how different people might counter various dominant Discourse constructions of meaning.

An example that centers on the use of one multimodal text within a larger set of texts occurred during a junior seminar on April 23rd. The textual focus of this particular seminar was on a documentary called *The Harvest: The story of the children who feed America*, which the students viewed as part of a unit of study centered on immigration, and during which the class also read *Of Mice and Men*, an article on immigration legislation reform, and viewed an additional documentary called *9500 Liberty*. By presenting *The Harvest* as part of the unit of study, Mr. Shaw used a multimodal text that incorporated written and visual (both still and moving) modes of communication that documented opposing viewpoints surrounding social justice issues. Thus, he attempted to foster student critical conversations focused on multiple perspectives.

As students viewed the documentary and responded to reflection questions provided by Mr. Shaw (e.g., What did you learn, how did it make you feel when you watched it, especially in the context of our discussion about immigration?) they reflected on the immigrant children's personal experiences of working at harvesting tomatoes. In doing so, they demonstrated their ability to consider the viewpoint(s) of others. Vasquez et al. (2013) note that "critical educators interrogate privilege and status . . . investigate

oppression . . . and use resistance, dialogue, and public debate as tools to engage in the politics of daily life” In doing so, their students are “invited to study a wide range of power relationships” (p. 13) to explore the ways in which certain groups of people are marginalized. For example, while Angíle noted, “my parents are pretty good at just handing us stuff, [but] because of the odds of having to work . . . [the immigrant children] won’t get that far in life,” Alesha added, “they have to, like, focus on that day, they can’t, like, plan ahead like I can do.” Finally, Chuchu said, “We don’t appreciate what we have as much as they do. And they hardly have anything to begin with.” As demonstrated by the responses of these students, Mr. Shaw’s use of a multimodal text fostered their ability to consider the viewpoints of others. Angíle, Alesha, and Chuchu each contrasted the life experiences of the immigrant children with their own, (relatively) privileged personal experiences. This example demonstrates how student interaction with a single multimodal text aligned with *analysis of multiple viewpoints*, in particular, those whose voices are often marginalized (Vasquez et al., 2013).

However, elsewhere, students also *analyzed multiple viewpoints* not just through the use of a single multimodal text, but also in interacting with multiple texts presented through various media. For example, during one particular junior class session on January 24th, Mr. Shaw presented students with two contradictory texts: In one, an autobiographical piece titled *The Cutting of my Long Hair*, the author, Zitkala-sa, demonstrates the negative effects of assimilation on children. The other, a painting by the artist John Gast titled *American Progress*, presents a view that portrays assimilation in positive images. By presenting these two texts, Mr. Shaw presented a multimodal text

set (visual, written) that featured two competing interpretations of assimilation and, thus, attempted to foster student *analysis of multiple viewpoints*. As a result, in their discussion of the Zitkala-sa essay students pointed out the viewpoint that assimilation is a negative social practice:

Mr. Shaw: Why did they cut her hair?

Nunu: Fear?

Young Esquire III: To be part of more, English, the kind of culture . . .

Chuchu: Because don't they believe like their hair is their power or something?

Mr. Shaw: Why are they cutting their hair?

Chuchu: To make them feel powerless.

Shane: It's the sign of an unskilled warrior.

Lark: To make them look like they are fitting in.

Likewise, as they turned to the Gast text, although the students recognized the painting presents a positive image of assimilation, they seemed to align with Zitkala-sa's viewpoint. In discussing manifest destiny as a concept in the painting, Mr. Shaw asked, "What's the best way to get that land?" Young Esquire III responded with, "take it," and Andrew with, "conform [the Native Americans]."

The examples above, demonstrate how the students engaged, first, with a single multimodal text and then, simultaneously, with two multimodal texts. During the critical conversation, students analyzed multiple and, at times, competing worldviews. In the first case, the students contrasted the personal experiences of immigrant children with

their own. In the other, they contrasted the personal experiences of Zitkala-sa with Gast's dominant Discourse worldview of assimilation.

Providing a space for students to examine multiple and contradictory worldviews, especially when presented through multiple modes, is important in a multiliterate world in which the literacy practices (and, thus, semiotic resources) through which students interact are proliferating (Luke, 2014). In Mr. Shaw's classroom, student perspectives cut across multiple cultures and, at times, run counter to dominant Discourse worldviews. Thus, because Mr. Shaw fostered conversations in which students *analyzed multiple* and, at times, *competing worldviews* (e.g., Latin American; Native American; European American) on assimilation he, in effect, provided a space where "authentic exchange and text work can occur around social and cultural issues" (Luke, 2014, p. 25). For certain students, this practice was important namely because it appeared to foster their participation in critical conversations when other strategies did not. Such interactions were especially true for Catarina, a junior, who most often sat quietly in the back of the room. In her case, when Mr. Shaw shared a multimodal documentary that explored competing perspectives toward immigration reform, she volunteered to share her opinion:

Ok, at one point in the video they were referring to illegal immigrants as parasites. And I think that's what really made me super-mad because they think that just because somebody isn't from the US, they come here because they want a better life, that we don't have any feelings, that we're just something that they can treat however they want.

Such a response demonstrates that, for students like Catarina, Mr. Shaw's use of multimodal texts served to foster interrogation of specific worldviews that position some

in marginalizing ways. For Catarina, who identifies as a second-generation Mexican immigrant, such a worldview appeared to be personally relevant. In her comment, she noted such views that position “illegal immigrants as parasites” make her particularly angry. For a student who rarely participated in critical conversations, Mr. Shaw’s use of the multimodal text set, thus, appeared to open a space for her to make her voice heard.

In sum, then, these examples demonstrate how Mr. Shaw used multimodal texts and text sets to foster critical conversations that align with one particular Critical Literacy component (*analysis of multiple and contradictory perspectives*). In each case, the texts and/or text sets presented varying perspectives focused on the concept of social justice as it relates to race, ethnicity, class, and/or gender. Various sets included such multimodal texts as an image of a statue of Booker T. Washington entitled *Lifting the Veil of Ignorance*, a music video of an anti-war song (*What’s Goin’ On*) by Marvin Gaye, an allegorical painting by John Gast (*American Progress*), and various speeches, poems, and documentaries. Each of these (often new media) texts, presented perspectives that, at times, contrast and, at times conformed in their perspective on social justice. In the end, for students such as Catarina, who did not often share their perspectives, this pedagogic move, at times, fostered their *analysis of specific worldviews*.

Use of popular culture texts. A fourth way that Mr. Shaw fostered conversations in which students *analyzed multiple viewpoints* was through the use of popular culture media and texts (sophomores - 10 class sessions; juniors - nine class sessions). As it is used here, popular culture functions under an understanding of culture as being discursively (re)produced ways of doing and being within specific contexts that

make sense to specific groups of people (Dunn, 1997; Levinson & Holland, 1996). Such contexts include a broad notion of what constitutes a text and is consistent with a New Literacies perspective that emphasizes a broad and ideological notion of literacy and its attendant practices. Thus, Mr. Shaw's use of popular culture texts is consistent with his interdisciplinary view of literacy learning. As Mr. Shaw continued to use the multimodal text sets noted above, conversations often turned toward the relationship between societal and local expectations that play out in popular culture. However, whereas the textual focus of the conversations was, at times, on a specific text often pre-selected by the teacher, at other times, the textual focus appeared to be less deliberate. Thus, the direction the critical conversations took was, as Mr. Shaw might characterize, organic - or "spontaneous spark[s] of thinking about how the world affects people and how people affect it."

In one instance, for example, the "spark" originated with Mr. Shaw asking the class if anyone has "ever seen the television show *Scrubs*?" After several students nodded, he described a character whose favorite alcoholic beverage is the "apple-tini." Mr. Shaw said, "He's so genteel. I love JD." Then, as if to question society's gender norms, he shouted in a humorous voice, "Men are not supposed to have an apple-tini! Why can't men have a fruit beverage? I like fruit beverages!" By using the term "genteel" to refer to a male character and then to exclaim, "Why can't men have a fruit beverage?," Mr. Shaw simultaneously modeled how one might analyze a popular culture text to *disrupt commonplace* assumptions about gender roles **and** how one might highlight a contradictory perspective toward such roles. As such, Young Esquire III,

Alex, Echo, Maybell, and Maria participated in a short discussion focused on the ways that toys such as GI Joe, Barbie, and Baby Alive dolls functioned in the same way as the apple-tini - that they often reproduce gender stereotypes. For example, after Young Esquire III said, “GI Joe kills! Barbie shops!,” Maybell noted, “girls start to think about being moms when they are like two because of their Baby Alive dolls.” Examples such as this one demonstrate exactly how such “spontaneous spark[s] of thinking” might lead to critical perspective-taking.

However, Mr. Shaw’s use of a popular culture text (*Scrubs* television show) to extend the conversation also suggests his view of literacy is broadly conceived. Such a conception is important because it may help students understand the ideological nature of literacy (Street, 2003). Specifically, in framing literacy to include popular culture texts and the particular ideologies they represent, Mr. Shaw fostered a critical conversation in which the students engaged in *analyzing multiple viewpoints* related to gender roles. To emphasize this point, as the critical conversation continued, immediately after Mr. Shaw referred to *Scrubs*, he made a second popular culture reference that furthered the discussion about gender roles and their relation to multiple (at times) competing worldviews. While Mr. Shaw and the students discussed the differences between Barbie and Ken (e.g., their clothing, their careers), he returned to the original idea presented in the free-write prompt (“What messages does society send young people about how they should behave as men or women. Who has it worse?”), and, thus, further engaged Young Esquire III and Maybell:

Mr. Shaw: I think you guys at a very young age are already getting messages about what it means to be a girl in our society, what it means to be a boy, what you should be interested in, how you should conduct your life, how you should, you know, what you should expect for yourselves. Like women are oftentimes taught to think about motherhood I think a lot earlier than boys are. Boys aren't taught to think about fatherhood the same way.

Young Esquire III: I mean they're taught to not think about it earlier.

Maybell: But like girls . . .

Alex: I don't want kids!

Maybell: Mr. Shaw, girls start to think about being moms when they are like two because of their *Baby Alive* dolls and what have you.

Teacher: Oh yeah, girls are given babies immediately. Like here take this and feed it. Boys are like, uh, I'm gonna get dirty.

This particular example demonstrates how Mr. Shaw fostered a discussion in which students analyzed the ways popular culture texts might contribute to the construction of multiple viewpoints. Thus, Mr. Shaw's use of such texts furthered student critical perspective-taking toward traditional gender roles. Interestingly, after Mr. Shaw modeled how one might use popular culture references to demonstrate how knowledge is understood differently from different perspectives (Vasquez et al., 2013), Maybell responded with her own popular culture reference. Drawing on it, she noted the ways societal expectations get transmitted through children's toys ("girls start to think about being moms when they are like two because of their *Baby Alive* dolls and what have you").

In sum, as these excerpts indicate, Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations during which students engaged in *analyzing multiple viewpoints*. By positioning students as co-

learners and asking open-ended questions, as well as using multimodal (and, often, popular culture) texts, Mr. Shaw opened a space in which he and the students might explore the ways “the world affects people and how people affect it.” In the end, Mr. Shaw fostered opportunities for students to position as “inventors of the curriculum, critics and creators of knowledge” (Luke, 2014, p. 25). In this regard, it is important to note that, although each of Mr. Shaw’s pedagogic moves were presented separately, in a sense, their interrelatedness contributed to student critical perspective-taking. In fact, in recalling how his use of multimodal texts fostered Catarina’s participation, it may be that one strategy’s affordances compensated for another’s constraints.

Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues

In addition to fostering the *analysis of multiple and contradictory perspectives*, Mr. Shaw also fostered critical conversations in which the *focus was on sociopolitical issues*. Experienced critical educators like Mr. Shaw are likely to engage students in Critical Literacy practices because they understand the complex relationship between the local (little p politics) and the societal (big P politics) (Janks, 2012). He did this through: (a) the use of open-ended questions; (b) multimodal texts; and (c) by drawing on his own (as well as asking his students to draw on their) personal experiences. Specifically, Mr. Shaw provided a space where his students could *focus on the sociopolitical issues* related to race, immigration, and both personal and collective responses to war. In total, of the classes I observed, 29 got coded as instances in which Mr. Shaw’s attempts at fostering critical conversations included connections to sociopolitical issues.

Use of open-ended questions. Focusing open-ended questions on the resonance between the local and the societal is one way Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations that centered on sociopolitical issues (sophomores - eight class sessions; juniors - six class sessions). In doing so, he created a space in which the students began to challenge the status quo of unequal power relations and, thus, examine how such relations reflect both little p and Big P politics (Janks, 2010). During one particular sophomore class session held on January 29th, for example, while students responded to an open-ended free-write prompt (What makes a man or woman just or unjust?). Mr. Shaw shared a scenario from the CollegeBoard level 5 pre-AP SpringBoard student workbook. He read:

Imagine that you are an American teenager. You've been out one night with some friends and you've been vandalizing some cars . . . imagine you are arrested by the police. Imagine what your punishment will be . . . how do you think justice will best be served?

Such a question began to foster student exploration of the relationship between little p and big P politics. Specifically, in response to the question, several students shared what they thought would happen if they were caught in this situation (little p politics). Maybell said she would get community service; Maria exclaimed that her parents “would ship me off to India and boarding school and not talk to me again!;” while Alex said, “you might get a fine.” Given the various student responses, the open-ended question in the free-write prompt paired with the scenario read by Mr. Shaw fostered students’ personal reflections on what kinds of “justice” might be meted out if they were to break the law. Thus, the conversation focused on the local context. As the conversation continued, Mr. Shaw asked an open-ended question focused on big P politics (What

influences your response to that question?). After Alex said, “the media has influenced [our responses],” Mr. Shaw referenced a National Public Radio news story about an American citizen who was arrested in Dubai for drug possession. The story described how the man was arrested when attempting to board a flight because he had three poppy seeds left on his clothing from a bread roll he had eaten earlier. After summarizing the story, Mr. Shaw asked yet a third open-ended question (also focused on big P politics): “What would you expect if it was an American? Would it be seen the same way in the American judicial system?” In asking this question, Mr. Shaw further fostered the conversation in such a way as to open a space for students to *focus* on the relationship between the local and the societal, in other words, *on sociopolitical issues*. By first asking students to focus on their own understanding of the local context and then on an American citizen’s experience within both a local and societal context, he provided an opportunity for students to focus on the relationship between little p and big P politics. As such, his open-ended questions began to lay the groundwork for a critical conversation on justice as it is culturally interpreted through various media. As students began to discuss the article, Alex (and Caelyn) appeared to demonstrate an understanding of the media’s role in perpetuating racial bias:

Alex: But maybe the media would, the media, is [the American citizen] White?

Mr. Shaw: Ahh haaaa. I don’t know, why does that matter if he’s White?

Caelyn: Because people, they can be *murked* about stuff.

Alex: If he’s Asian or White, then you’re fine, but if you’re Hispanic and Black . . . yeah. The media is gonna be like, this Black guy was causing trouble again . . . he’s on drugs.

Mr. Shaw: So, it's even more complicated. It's not just, is he American? What type of American? Who is he affiliated with? Who are his parents? How does he look? What kind of neighborhood is he from? What was he wearing? It all, it gets more complicated.

Alex: He's a Black guy.

By asking if the man was "Asian or White" and by implicating the media in positioning various cultural groups in ways that marginalize (or even criminalize) them based on race, Alex focused on the societal as it relates to racial bias. To further this point, Caelyn suggested that if the man was not White, the result might have been that he would be "murked," which, according to urbandictionary.com, means "badly defeated at something." Thus, both students demonstrated their understanding of how someone's race might figure into their experience within a judicial system.

In terms of their focus on sociopolitical issues and the relationship between little p and big P politics, it is important to note that in the first part of this critical conversation, Mr. Shaw focused his open-ended questions on little p politics. He asked students what might happen if they were to get arrested for breaking the law. While most responses focused on minor punishments (e.g., Alex noted that he "might get a fine"), Caelyn said, "I expect the worst . . . I would be like, oh my god, I'm going to go to jail, I'm going to die in jail." In turning to the second part of the conversation, when Mr. Shaw began to redirect his open-ended questions toward big P politics (e.g., "What would you expect if he was American?"), Alex's response differed from his previous one. He suggested that the punishment meted out by the judicial system might be influenced by the Media's

interjection of racial bias. Thus, by *focusing on sociopolitical issues*, he explicitly called attention to the status quo of unequal power relations.

However, whereas Alex (who identifies as a White male) suggested that his punishment would differ from someone's who is "Hispanic or Black," Caelyn (who identifies as an African female), suggested that her punishment would not. Specifically, consistent with her response to the first (little p politics) question ("I might die in jail") in her response to the second (big P politics) question about race ("Why does it matter if he's White?"), Caelyn suggested that if the citizen were not White, he might get "murked." In other words, she believed he might suffer similar consequences as she. Such distinctions are important to recognize when attempting to foster critical conversations within a multiliterate classroom. For one, it suggests critical educators like Mr. Shaw attend to not just what their students say, but also the cultural contexts that might contribute to such critical conversations. Secondly, Alex and Caelyn's responses show how students with varying cultural backgrounds might demonstrate their understanding of the local and the societal, or, as Janks (2010) notes, the relationship between little p and big P politics.

Although this class session demonstrates how open-ended questions might foster critical conversations during which students from varying cultural backgrounds unpack issues socio-politically (Vasquez et al., 2013), Alex and Caelyn's responses also suggest that a potential opportunity was missed. In particular, exploring with the students how and why Alex and Caelyn's responses differed may have extended the conversation to include analyses of multiple viewpoints influenced by the relative privilege(s) certain

cultural groups might experience. Such a discussion might, thus, enrich students' understandings of how systems of meaning may get reproduced through various, often subtle, social practices. Ultimately, such missed opportunities appear to constrain the degree to which student literacy practices align with multiple Critical Literacy components.

Use of multimodal text sets. A second way Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations in which students *focused on sociopolitical issues* was by creating a multimodal text set that demonstrated for the students how one might go about protesting governmental/societal policies and/or actions. Similar to the example above, the use of such text sets fostered conversations in which students focused on the relationship between little p and big P politics. One such example occurred during a February fifth sophomore class session in which Mr. Shaw combined a non-print text (digital photograph) with a traditional print-based text (written speech) to create a multimodal text set.

As often occurred, at the beginning of class, Mr. Shaw began the conversation with a free-write prompt. After 15 minutes of discussion, during which students considered the difference between peaceful and violent protests (including boycotts and riots), he displayed for the class a digital image of a monk who had lit himself on fire in protest of the Vietnam War. As they viewed the image, several students responded with incredulity. For example, Maria asked, "Is that real?" and Reagan followed with, "Are you serious? I thought it was a painting!" Once they had voiced their initial shock, Mr. Shaw described the context of the photograph and then explained that some forms of

violent protest are actually self-inflicted and “contain[ed] no words.” To follow, he asked, “Do you think people would act differently . . . [if they] hear about death, fighting . . . and why do you feel that way?” Given the subject of the digital photograph, in essence, this question prompted students to evaluate how a mode of communication might contribute to various interpretations of extreme forms of protest related to big P politics. Thus, Mr. Shaw provided a space for the students to participate in a conversation that *focused on sociopolitical issues*. In their responses to his question, both Echo and Petch turned their focus toward larger sociopolitical contexts associated with civil disobedience:

Echo: Today, if something were to happen it would affect everyone because everybody would be, like, ok if it happens here its gonna happen over there. So they'd be like, ok, now we got to get everyone involved.

Petch: That would get all over the media. They would just jump on that.

Such comments demonstrate that, while Mr. Shaw's use of the digital photograph fostered shock and disbelief for some students, for others it fostered critical perspective-taking toward the ways one person's little p politics (such as this extreme form of personal protest) might be related to the big P politics of “get[ting] everyone involved.” As such, although the image was extreme in its content, its use fostered a conversation. Unpack[ing] issues socio-politically (Vasquez et al., 2013), as Petch did here, suggests that he is aware of how the media might reflect localized attitudes towards big P politics. This example demonstrates the importance of providing a space for students to engage in this kind of critical conversation; in particular it opens spaces for students to critique

personal localized responses toward the impact of big P politics on people's lives (Leland et al., 1999; Schieble, 2012).

As part of the set, however, Mr. Shaw also included a second text, a speech written by Mahatma Gandhi calling for less extreme forms of protest. As they read and discussed the speech, the conversation turned toward analyzing Gandhi's argument for using civil disobedience against the ruling powers in India. In this instance, however, instead of attempting to use a text to foster critical perspective-taking toward individual acts of protest (little p politics), Mr. Shaw attempted to use a text to direct the conversation toward collective acts of protest (big P politics). In referring to Gandhi's call for collective action, Mr. Shaw asked the students to consider such a call in relation to American culture. He said:

Let's talk about . . . like your youth culture and your American culture. Do we have the resolve or the attitude to go this route for something that we really truly care, or do we have issues that need such protest or such action or reaction today?

In response, Reagan argued that, unlike Gandhi's contemporary Indian citizens, her contemporary American citizens would be "more concerned about themselves and not the greater good of everyone else" and so, would not "sacrifice as much." However, Petch reminded the students that "we vote" and thus "we help decide a law." To this point, Alex noted:

If I was 18 . . . I could vote. I'd feel like I would have some sort of influence on the government, not very much for a single individual, but . . . since I can do that everybody can do that. And if you have that option you have that right and you are part of our government.

This exchange suggests that Mr. Shaw's use of a second text provided a space in which students might explore their ideas about how Americans might respond collectively to issues associated with sociopolitical systems. As Mr. Shaw re-contextualized Ghandi's understanding of civil disobedience within American culture, students responded by discussing their beliefs about American attitudes toward civic engagement. While Reagan viewed Americans as being too self-centered to concern themselves with the "greater good of everyone else," both Petch and Alex argued that, in and of itself, voting is a form of civic engagement that allows us to "decide a law" and "have some sort of influence on the government." These comments suggest that within the space Mr. Shaw provided, certain students explored how they might not only reflect on big P politics but may also reflect on how one form of little p politics, (e.g., voting) might be related to, and even influence, such larger big P political contexts.

In sum, Mr. Shaw's use of a multimodal text set that, in this case, included both a traditional (written speech) and a new media (digital photograph) text, fostered an extended conversation in which students *focused on sociopolitical issues*. Furthermore, the set demonstrated for the students two different ways one might go about protesting governmental/societal policies and/or actions. Thus, data from this class session suggests that, when Mr. Shaw used various kinds of texts to foster critical conversations, students demonstrated the capacity to assess the relationship between little p and big P politics.

Drawing on personal experiences. A third way Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations that connect to sociopolitical issues was by drawing on his personal experiences to model how one might engage in critical conversations *focused on*

sociopolitical issues. However, he also provided opportunities for students to draw on their own personal experiences to make sense out of such issues. For example, within the unit of study in which the juniors focused on the issue of immigration, during a class session on April 11th Mr. Shaw began the class with the following free-write prompt written on the whiteboard: “Write down what comes to mind when you hear/think of the term: Immigrant.” When Alesha noted that the word immigrant connotes “breaking the law,” Mr. Shaw reflected on his own personal experiences of watching a documentary on immigration. Because the film was set in a city he “drives by every day” he explained it triggered thoughts about current news events surrounding both “[the Dream Act] that’s coming up” and the “Islamophobia” related to the recent Boston Marathon bombings. To emphasize the complexity such thinking might require, he noted, “now [the Boston marathon bombing] is somewhat of an immigrant-slash-culture-religion problem. You don’t have to be an immigrant to be Islamic, so therefore it’s not just an immigrant [issue].” This example demonstrates one way Mr. Shaw drew on his personal experience to model how students might engage in complex critical conversations about sociopolitical issues. In his explanation he showed that each of the “texts” with which he interacted related to his ongoing (and developing) understanding of immigration issues, especially those associated with race and religion.

However, another example within the same class session suggests that he also fostered conversations in which students drew on their own personal experiences to further their understanding of little p politics and big P politics. After modeling how one might take up a critical perspective toward a sociopolitical issue, Mr. Shaw told the

students that they were now going to take a quiz. As students voiced varying degrees of surprise (e.g., “are you serious?”), Mr. Shaw began to distribute the quiz while saying:

All of us in here for the most part were born here. Therefore, you are an American citizen . . . There’s millions of people, however, who . . . want to become an American citizen. They’ll go through the naturalization process. That process asks them to . . . take this test where they get asked ten out of 100 questions . . .

As students worked on the quiz, they and Mr. Shaw engaged in a critical conversation during which they *focused on sociopolitical issues* associated with the little p politics of citizenship. For example, after Mr. Shaw exclaimed (in a humorous tone) to one of the students, “you’re an American citizen, you should know these things,” Angílé responded with, “We don’t learn stuff like this. This is nonsense.” As the conversation continued, it turned away from students responding to their (in)ability to answer the questions to analyzing what the quiz means. After Mr. Shaw asked, “How did that make you feel knowing that you, an American citizen, could barely pass this test?” Catarina responded, “I feel ashamed of myself, because my mom, she wasn’t born here, she came here when she was a teenager, she could’ve passed that test. She knows a lot about this thing” and Angílé followed with, “The question is: What does that say about America?” Taken together, these comments demonstrate how, within a critical conversation, students might draw on personal experience to examine the relationship between little p and big P politics. It should be noted that because both of these students identify as second-generation immigrants this example shows how Mr. Shaw opened spaces where students from non-dominant Discourse communities might share their attitudes toward the kinds

of sociopolitical issues that directly affect their lives and, thus, begin to “interrogate privilege and status . . . to engage in the politics of daily life” (Vasquez et al., 2013).

However, it should also be noted that, although this particular critical conversation demonstrated how a critical educator might foster Critical Literacy practices in which students *focus on sociopolitical issues*, the degree to which certain students analyzed the relationship between little p and big P politics varied. In response to Angilé’s question (“What does that say about America?) in a sarcastic tone, Chuchu said, “It doesn’t matter . . . we created the drive through!” On the other hand, Shane said:

I think it’s just like a power thirst . . . because they always try to control us in some way. And whenever they’re not able to . . . they try and find a loophole where they are able to. So I just think it’s power hungry.

Such disparities in the degree to which students engage in critical perspective-taking suggests that for critical educators like Mr. Shaw, who wish to foster conversations that align with multiple Critical Literacy components, doing so may require multiple opportunities for classroom interaction. This is because not all students fully engaged at all times in any particular critical conversation. In fact, as noted above, at times, for students like Catarina, participation was nearly non-existent. Thus, it is important to note that my discussion of the ways Mr. Shaw fosters conversations related to sociopolitical issues has referenced three different class sessions that centered on: the ways justice is meted out within local and societal contexts; how one might protest wars and/or oppression of certain cultural groups; and on the current American government’s policies on immigration.

In sum, then, these examples suggest that Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations in which students *focused on sociopolitical issues* in three different ways: by asking open-ended questions; using multimodal text sets; and by drawing on personal experiences while also encouraging students to do the same. In asking open-ended questions, he provided a space for students from varying cultural communities to explore the relationship between little p and big P politics. At the same time, his use of multimodal text sets modeled, albeit in one case an extreme example, certain individual and collective responses to governmental oppression and violence. Finally, drawing on personal experience fostered a conversation centered on how one might take up a critical perspective toward big P political issues related to the complexities of immigration. While Mr. Shaw modeled such critical perspective-taking, he also provided opportunities for students to draw on their own personal experiences to make sense of the relationship between the local and the societal. In combination, these strategies served to foster student thinking about how their everyday experiences might be related to larger sociopolitical issues.

Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice

As noted by Lewison et al. (2002), going beyond reflecting on what one has done or might do to fully align with *taking action and promoting social justice* is not easy. In their 2002 article, the authors noted that both newcomer and novice Critical educators may, in certain situations, fall short of providing opportunities for students to fully align with this fourth Critical Literacy component. In analyzing the ways Mr. Shaw fostered such Critical Literacy practices, data analysis indicates this appears to hold true for

experienced critical educators as well, especially when considering the critical conversations that took place in his classroom. In other words, although Mr. Shaw's use of such things as open-ended questions, multimodal texts and text sets, and popular culture references fostered critical conversations in which students *disrupted the commonplace, analyzed multiple viewpoints, and focused on sociopolitical issues*, they often did not fully align with *taking action and promoting social justice*.

This may, in part, be due to the reflective nature of the critical conversation (Leland et al., 1999; Schieble, 2012). That is to say, the degree to which the students engaged in this fourth component was, at times, limited to their reflection on past (as well as their contemplation of future) actions. Such conversations, then, amounted to talking about actions rather than engaging in them. Critical conversations of this sort involved, for example, discussions about the ways social practices have maintained poverty and hunger as well as considering opportunities for volunteering at local organizations related to the alleviation of such social problems.

Although conversations did not fully align with this component, when students reflected on past actions and contemplated future ones, they began to exercise critical reflexivity—to think as problem-posers and solvers might think (Freire, 1973; Janks, 2010). Given this limitation, data analysis of critical conversations associated with the fourth Critical Literacy component focuses primarily on the reflective and contemplative aspects of *taking action and promoting social justice*. As such, the data suggest that Mr. Shaw attempted to foster critical conversations of this sort in two main ways: 1) by using open-ended questions; and 2) by using multimodal text sets. Such data indicate that

although students reflected on past actions, their contemplation of the ways they might challenge such actions in the future was limited.

Use of open-ended questions. On April 15th during a junior conversation, Mr. Shaw provided the following free-write prompt, “Should the US government only be concerned with the future prosperity of its ‘legal’ (born/naturalized) citizens? Consider education, jobs, health care, welfare, etc. What does it mean to be a citizen in the first place?” In response to the prompt, Angílé said:

Yeah, well, I think that they should be concerned, I mean, others leave their country to come to this country because of their situations, probably. But I mean you can't say . . . like, it's kinda selfish in a way, to say that we shouldn't let them be on our pie because they're not, like, from here. Our founding fathers aren't from here as well.

In this response, by suggesting our “founding fathers aren't from here,” Angílé began to critique the social practices associated with immigration. Such an example demonstrates how one student reflected on past actions that maintain the status quo. This interpretation is complicated, however, when considering that, within the same critical conversation, Angílé (whose family immigrated from Ivory Coast) shared that she believes her mother and uncle are often the target of racial profiling:

Angílé: Especially when you're traveling, they stop you a lot. Like my mom and my uncle gets stopped.

Mr. Shaw: Really, why is that?

Angílé: My uncle has like a Muslim last name. I don't know why my mom always gets pulled but she always gets pulled.

Mr. Shaw: Your uncle has a Muslim last name so he gets stopped all the time. Has anybody experienced anything like that, like in travel? Where they've been you know I guess withheld for extra searching or something like that? Or questioning or anything like that?

Alesha: I thought they couldn't search you like unless . . .

Angíle: They do, they stop you. They random search before you get on the plane.

Although this brief exchange further demonstrates that the students reflected on what happens when the powerful maintain the status quo, their critical conversation fell short of exploring ways they might become actors who challenge such social practices. Based on past actions, Angíle explained how her uncle appears to be targeted for racial profiling simply because his name sounds "Muslim." However, neither Angíle nor her fellow classmates contemplated how future actions of this sort might be challenged.

While students fell short of exploring how they might *take action to promote social justice*, it also appears that in this instance, an opportunity was lost for Mr. Shaw to encourage students to do so. As the conversation continued, Alesha's questions emphasized this point. In response to Mr. Shaw sharing a personal story in which a Muslim friend was prevented from returning to the United States after 9/11, Alesha asked, "So like when they do that . . . how do they apologize or something?" When Mr. Shaw answered, "They don't have to, they just let you go," Alesha asked again, "so you can't like sue them or anything?" and Mr. Shaw responded, "Nope, you're like a prisoner of war." While Mr. Shaw did emphasize the injustice of such unequal power relations, this example suggests that Alesha's questions functioned as an opportunity to direct the conversation toward contemplating how students might *take action to promote social*

justice. However, because Mr. Shaw then turned the conversation instead toward relating such injustices to those found in the play they were reading at the moment, in this instance, such an opportunity was lost. This point is important to note because it indicates that not only is student alignment with specific Critical Literacy components, at times, constrained, but a teacher's attempts at fostering such alignment may, at times, also be constrained.

A second example further emphasizes such challenges. During a junior class session on April 23rd, as noted in the *analysis of multiple viewpoints* section above, Mr. Shaw included a documentary film titled *The Harvest: The story of the children who feed America*, as part of multimodal text set. After their viewing, Mr. Shaw used open-ended questions associated with the film's content. Such questions fostered a conversation in which students not only *analyzed multiple viewpoints* (as noted above), they also reflected on their own and others' past actions related to promoting social justice.

In that conversation, while Angilé, Alesha, and Chuchu critiqued the social practices ("media, politics") that contribute to the poverty migrant children experience, they also began to acknowledge their own complicity in those social practices. For example, in comparing the migrant children's experiences to his own, Chuchu noted, "the stuff we have, we take it for granted. Like having food on our table, like having a school to go to . . . we don't appreciate what we have as much as they do." In this comment, Chuchu began to reflect on his past attitudes toward, and expectations for, being provided education, material possessions, and food. However, unlike the April 15 example, perhaps as a way to redirect the conversation toward greater reflexivity, Mr. Shaw asked

a follow-up question, “Whose story had the biggest impact on you and why?” In answering this question, students began to implicate the media and the US Government as complicit in the maintenance of social practices that privilege some and subordinate others. Catarina noted, for example, that “if some American family went into the hospital wanting to save their child from some disease and the hospital didn’t want to help them, the first thing they [would] do is sue the hospital.” In responding to Catarina, Angílé, noted, “That would be an outrage, that would be on CNN.” Interestingly, immediately after this comment, Alesha further critiqued the American government for “thinking more about other little BS rather than what’s like really important, like feeding little kids and stuff,” and the media for “having these commercials about feeding the children in Africa and stuff like that, like you have to pay all this money for a commercial but you cannot pay to feed them. That makes me really angry.” Yet, when Angílé’s comment to Alesha indicated that we have the capacity to act (“you should donate”), Alesha said, “I be scared to donate because if I donate it’s not gonna go there.” Thus, whereas students began to contemplate how they might act on that critical reflection, they stopped short when Alesha voiced skepticism toward Angílé’s suggestion.

These two examples suggest that although students might reflect on past actions related to promoting social justice, the critical conversation was limited in that students fell short of fully contemplating future actions. While Chuchu began to consider his complicity in the maintenance of unequal power relations and while Angílé did encourage Alesha to take action (and thus began to promote social justice) both Alesha and Chuchu did not consider how they or others might begin to act on such critical

perspectives. Thus, in both cases, student critical reflexivity was limited to reflecting on past actions. Furthermore, like the previous example, it appears that Mr. Shaw missed an opportunity to further encourage students to *take action to promote social justice*. In this case, Alesha noted that she is “scared to donate because . . . [the money is] not gonna go there.” One response to such a comment could be to provide opportunities for students to research the percentage of donations that go directly to relief efforts. However, instead, Mr. Shaw responded that he didn’t “want to lead the conversation too much.” Such a comment perhaps suggests that while positioning students as co-learners in certain instances may (as discussed earlier) foster student critical perspective-taking, in other instances, it may not. Such instances further suggest that, at times, a teacher’s personal Critical Pedagogy may constrain full engagement with specific Critical Literacy components. As such, in those instances, there may be a need to balance positioning students as co-learners with taking a more active role in directing the conversation toward specific Critical Literacy actions.

Use of multimodal text sets. During the class sessions on April 15th and 23rd, Mr. Shaw not only asked open-ended questions, he also used a multimodal text set that included a documentary film, an article on illegal immigration by Howard Zinn, and the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. However, although his use of open-ended questions and a multimodal text set did lead students to focus more critically on the US Government’s actions toward immigrants and foreign citizens (e.g., Angilé noted that “lack of jobs, lack of money” contributes to the people’s reactions toward immigrants), the conversations ended at reflecting on past actions related to social justice. Critical

conversations, then, appeared to be limited in their capacity for aligning with the fourth component not only in terms of student action but also in their contemplation of such future actions. In fact, a simple comparison of the number of times I observed instances in which Mr. Shaw fostered student engagement in critical conversations that aligned with *taking action and promoting social justice* supports this notion. While critical conversations that aligned with *disruption of the commonplace* totaled 26, *analysis of multiple perspectives* totaled 27, and *focusing on sociopolitical issues* totaled 28, the number of observations in which Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations that aligned with *reflection and action on the world* totaled only two. Thus, in order to fully explore the ways Mr. Shaw fostered Critical Literacy practices that aligned fully with this fourth Critical Literacy component, I turn to what he calls the “social justice project,” a literacy practice that in combination with the critical conversation, at times, fully extended into this fourth component.

Critical Text Production

Unlike the critical conversations, which were ongoing, and more often limited to the first three Critical Literacy components, the process of creating and presenting critical texts had a clear beginning (introduction with the assignment sheet) and ending point (the culminating presentation) and more often aligned with *taking action and promoting social justice*. As such, within this dissertation study, analysis of student critical text production focuses on two specific examples that demonstrate how Mr. Shaw fostered this type of Critical Literacy practice: the TED Talk and the Media Analysis Project. One example, the TED Talk, was assigned to the sophomore class. Analysis of data

associated with its creation and presentation demonstrates that Mr. Shaw fostered such text production in two ways: He familiarized students with formal rhetorical strategies (e.g., logos, pathos, ethos); and used a multimodal text in conjunction with critical conversations to demonstrate how one might *disrupt the commonplace, analyze multiple viewpoints, and take action to promote social justice*. Furthermore, in fostering the construction of these two projects, Mr. Shaw also used the critical conversation. Thus, in the case of creating and presenting these critical texts, one Critical Literacy practice (the critical conversation) got used to foster another (critical text production). Finally, while the projects demonstrate how Mr. Shaw used multimodal text sets as models, the TED Talk set included a single genre, while the Media Analysis set drew on multiple genres.

In discussing, then, what Mr. Shaw does to foster critical text production, I first describe what constitutes this kind of literacy practice. Then, I discuss the strategies Mr. Shaw used to foster each of the two examples. Throughout the discussion I highlight the specific Critical Literacy components to which each example aligns. Organizing the discussion in this way demonstrates the interrelatedness of the components. As such, unlike the discussion above that focuses on fostering the critical conversation, data analysis associated with critical text production suggests that Mr. Shaw fostered literacy practices in which students more fully engaged in *taking action and promoting social justice*. Data analysis also revealed that unlike critical conversations, the students engaged in *interrogating multiple viewpoints* by constructing counternarratives (Giroux et al., 1996). In other words, this organizational scheme functions to highlight the differences between critical conversations and critical text production.

What Constitutes Critical Text Production

In order to contextualize my discussion of critical text production I begin by describing Mr. Shaw's understanding of what constitutes this type of Critical Literacy practice. Then, I describe how creating and presenting such texts aligns with specific Critical Literacy components. Analysis of teacher interviews, informal conversations, and classroom observations suggests that Mr. Shaw understands what he calls the "student action project" to be a way for students to consider perspectives that differ from their own. For example, during the initial interview I conducted with Mr. Shaw on January 24th, he said, "There's a reputation that my class carries that we're going to do a lot of discussion, going to do a lot of projects . . . We're going to go look at the world a different way and I think [the students] appreciate that." Thus, by including opportunities to "do a lot of projects" through which students "look at the world a different way," students in Mr. Shaw's class had an opportunity to *analyze multiple perspectives*. While data analysis confirmed Mr. Shaw's comments, it also suggested that when engaging in such text production, at times, students *took action to promote social justice*. In total, such critical perspective-taking occurred through each of the eight (four sophomore; four junior) different critical texts the students created during the semester of observation.

Throughout the course of the semester, Mr. Shaw's idea of what constituted a project took several forms. During his visit to the student teacher seminar at his alma mater, he described one type of project as an "action project." In elaborating, he told the group of pre-service teachers that he asks the sophomore students to "do these action projects [that] came out of, again, this organic, kind of spontaneous sparks of thinking

about how the world affects people and how people affect it.” Such projects require students to alter the way they live their day-to day-lives in order, for example, to experience in some way, according to Mr. Shaw, “what it feels like to live in a world where your voice isn’t heard.” A second form of critical text production was the Multigenre Project (MGP), which Mr. Shaw assigns to the junior class as a culminating activity. Like others, this particular project takes on social justice as its theme. In completing it, students are required to create multiple (multimodal) texts that focus on some aspect of social justice as it relates to a specific social activist group or individual. In all of these different kinds of projects, Mr. Shaw encourages his students, as he said, “to ask why?”

Engaging in these kinds of literacy practices, then, provided opportunities for students to connect with specific Critical Literacy components, such as *analysis of multiple viewpoints* and *focusing on sociopolitical issues*. This is especially important for two reasons. For one, such projects provided a space for certain students to explore how those “whose voices aren’t heard” might negotiate their day-to-day interactions. For other students, exploring multiple viewpoints suggests ways one might resist or challenge the forces that maintain unequal power relations that result in such marginalizations (Janks, 2010). Such opportunities are especially important in a world that is becoming increasingly multiliterate (New London Group, 1996). Secondly, it also provided opportunities for students to explore the relationship between the local and the societal in ways that might contextualize their *analysis of multiple viewpoints* within micro and macro systems of meaning (Vasquez et al., 2013).

Practices of this nature are also important for teachers who wish to engage students in critical text production. Because it emphasizes design and production rather than simply reception, it is consistent with Freire's concept of praxis, or engagement in reflection and action on the word and the world (Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2003). As such, when students engage in this literacy practice they not only reflect on past and contemplate future actions, because they create and present texts that promote social justice they may act. Thus, unlike the critical conversation, this kind of text production more fully aligns with the fourth Critical Literacy component: *taking action and promoting social justice*. Critical text production, Janks explains, is a kind of "writing back to power" (2010). It hearkens toward the notion of multiliteracies, which, according to the New London Group (1996), emphasizes both the multimodal nature of text consumption and production as well as the growing diversity of our student populations. Such a Critical Literacy practice, thus, also involves *analyzing multiple viewpoints* and/or *disrupting the commonplace*. Taking this into consideration, critical educators often frame text production as a way to help students to understand the constructed nature of knowledge and to consider the ways in which they position themselves as well as those who "read" their (and others') texts (Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2003).

The TED Talk

One kind of text production Mr. Shaw fostered is centered on the TED Talk. In this particular project, which he assigns to his sophomore class, Mr. Shaw asks students to provide an argument for why their audience should (or should not) act on specific social issues. He said he assigns this project because, "we sometimes don't give the kids

enough space to talk about the things they want to talk about.” As a result of providing “enough space,” students construct texts that focus on wide-ranging issues such as bullying, pacifism, and “raising awareness about things like how we perceive recycling.” As such, the goal of constructing and presenting these texts, in particular, is for students to urge their audiences to *take action to promote social justice*.

For example, on January 22nd, in introducing the TED Talk as the initial sophomore project, Mr. Shaw wrote on the board as a free-write prompt a quote by Robert Kennedy: “Each time a man stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot or situation of others or strikes out against injustice he sends forth tiny ripples of hope.” As students turned their attention to the quote, Mr. Shaw asked, “What issues or injustices do you feel or believe need ripples of hope?” Responses ranged from, “modern-day racism,” “poverty,” and “homelessness,” to “bullying,” and even “the injustice of not being immortal.” After students exhausted their list, Mr. Shaw segued into a description of the TED Talk student project. He said:

TED stands for Technology, Education, and Design. And these people from all over the globe come together to discuss or to share their research, share ideas, and so forth, in these areas . . . we’re going to focus on topics that we feel are injustices and through research and whatnot we’re going to do our own TED Talks. The goal for these TED Talks [is] to be informative, not argumentative, but building towards development of argument.

By describing the project in this way, Mr. Shaw began to frame it as critical text production (Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2003), a literacy practice through which students would focus on “injustices” that used as their model the “talks” given during the annual Technology, Entertainment, and Design conferences held worldwide.

According to the TED website, the conferences “bring together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives” (About TED). Many of these talks function as calls to action, especially in response to social justice issues. For example, a quick search of the website’s database for the term “social justice” provided 2089 results. Such results included talks on “representing the unrepresented,” how to use dance to effect change in the world, and a “call to reinvent liberal arts education” in order to teach students “the value of justice, equity, [and] truth.” Framed as such, the TED Talk student project serves as an example of one kind of literacy practice (critical text production) Mr. Shaw attempted to foster. Because it functioned, in many cases, as a call to action speech, in comparison to the critical conversation, it more fully aligned with the fourth Critical Literacy component: *taking action and promoting social justice*.

Use of TED Talks as multimodal text set. One way Mr. Shaw fostered the process of creating and presenting critical texts was by using TED Talks he located on the TED website as a kind of multimodal text set. In combination with the critical conversation, the set modeled how one might construct a call to action speech. For example, one text in the set featured a talk by Ken Robinson critiquing our current industrial model for education. Prior to showing the talk, however, Mr. Shaw wrote on the whiteboard viewing instructions that included a question focused on Robinson’s message: “Do you disagree or agree with the point Ken Robinson is trying to make?” To begin the post-viewing discussion, Mr. Shaw turned to the whiteboard question. He asked, “Do you think creativity is taught out of us as we go through school?” As such,

students reflected on how one person constructed a critical text that reflects on the flawed structure of the American educational system and calls on an audience to change that structure in order to benefit all of America's children. In analyzing the model text, Young Esquire III agreed with Robinson. He said, "Nowadays the majority of high schools . . . don't really have an art program, like, most of all we have is like music or like an art class. They don't expand like to dance and all that kind of stuff." In a follow-up question directed toward the entire class, Mr. Shaw prompted further analysis of the model text's message, "Why do you think school officials choose to cut down on art programs and music programs, dance programs, things like that . . .?" In response to this question, several additional students began to take up a critical perspective similar to Robinson's. In one segment as Maria and Young Esquire III challenged the educational system, other students joined in:

Maria: How often do you hear teachers say, oh, you should become a dance major, an art major? Like you hear teachers say you should go into a science major or something like that, but you never hear teachers actually saying, oh you should draw.

Young Esquire III: That's because they've also been brainwashed.

Maria: Society is brainwashing them.

Mr. Shaw: Brainwashed? What makes you think I've been brainwashed?

Maria: We don't have art, at this school!

Alex: We went to this school to change our life though.

Petch: We went to this school for the college though.

Young Esquire III: But they don't talk about the Art of English. Art of English has been dropped also. Math and Science, like that's up there, people talk about

that all the time but you don't hear them talk about the Art of English, the Art of anything else.

Mr. Shaw: That's a good point.

Caelyn: Math and Science apply to almost anything, that's why they focus on it more.

Young Esquire III: Yeah, but you have to write on everything.

Caelyn: Yeah, I know, but they expect us to know that, since we learned it from Kindergarten on up there.

Petch: Entertainment is a big deal. I mean we don't want to be bored all the time. Like everybody loves watching TV and movies . . .

In considering the context of this exchange it is evident that Mr. Shaw used a multimodal model text to foster the kinds of perspective-taking involved in, as Mr. Shaw put it, thinking “about how the world affects people and how people affect it.” As the excerpt demonstrates, the conversation aligned with a specific Critical Literacy component - *disrupting the commonplace*. Several students, for example, critiqued a system of meaning that places supreme value on Math and Science. Thus, they posed problems associated with “all subjects of study” (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383) within the local school system as well as society at large. Young Esquire III suggested that “society” has “brainwashed [teachers]” into thinking that, instead of Art, “Math and Science is up there,” and, as a response, Petch suggested that there is value in entertainment, that “entertainment is a big deal.” These comments show that both Petch and Young Esquire III challenged commonsense understandings of what kinds of learning are most valued in the schools they have attended.

Familiarizing students with rhetorical appeals. In framing Robinson's TED Talk as a model for students to use in constructing their own TED Talk, during the initial phase of creating the projects, Mr. Shaw attempted to scaffold student understanding of the skills needed to effectively construct an argumentative speech. Thus, a second way he fostered the TED Talk as a kind of Critical Literacy practice was by introducing the concept of the rhetorical triangle. In returning to his introduction of the TED Talk, one question Mr. Shaw asked was, "How do we construct arguments and how do we make those arguments appealing to people? It's through this little thing called the rhetorical triangle." After he distributed a graphic of the triangle Mr. Shaw played an animated video to provide, in his words, "a little more insight into how the rhetorical triangle is used in argumentation." When done, he led the students in a discussion of how the teenager in the video used logos, pathos, and ethos to persuade his mother to purchase a pizza for dinner, as well as the claim, warrant, and grounds he laid out in his argument. In sum, then, another way Mr. Shaw attempted to foster a specific Critical Literacy practice (critical text production) was to familiarize the students with traditional rhetorical appeals used in the argumentative speech. As such, because it functioned as an argument for social justice, or "ripples of hope," Mr. Shaw attempted to foster a literacy practice that aligned with a Critical Literacy component essential for fully engaging in praxis, or critical reflection and action (Freire, 1973).

For example, during a class session that occurred the following week, to introduce a second text in the set, Mr. Shaw provided a chart for students to practice locating the rhetorical appeals. As they viewed a talk given by a visual artist who employed various

images to support her argument for reducing plastic pollution, the students recorded her rhetorical appeals. Thus, in modeling the structure for an argumentative speech, the artist's TED Talk also modeled the critical stance one might choose to urge an audience to *take action and promote social justice*. As such, in the brief conversation that followed the artist's speech, Mr. Shaw and his students focused on her call to action and, thus, her attempt to *disrupt commonplace* practices associated with plastic consumption:

Alex: [her main point is] that there are toxins in plastic.

Echo: That's the main point of the TED Talk is to get the point across.

Mr. Shaw: [to Alex] I don't think that's a narrative that a lot of people have when they throw their plastic into the recycling, that it may end up in a giant patch in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Petch: I think we [should recycle.]

Alex: We're too lazy; we won't do that.

Mr. Shaw: People say that the majority of our plastic waste ends up in a landfill in India. That it's just kinda moved from here to somewhere else. So, its not necessarily . . . let's talk about analyzing it for . . . how she presents her TED Talk.

In this brief exchange it is clear that the students began to focus on the degree to which one might heed the artist's call to action. However, instead of allowing the class discussion to continue only in this direction, Mr. Shaw re-directed it toward the rhetorical strategies the artist used (e.g., "let's talk about analyzing it for . . . how she presents her TED Talk"). As the conversation continued, students used handout questions to locate the rhetorical appeals needed for this type of text. For example, Maria noted that the artist used ethos to position herself as a reliable speaker, Alex noted that she used images

as an emotional appeal (pathos), and Jax recalled several statistics she used (logos) to indicate the serious nature of the situation. Finally, Maybell identified her call to action - to reduce plastic waste.

Interestingly, in considering the images the artist used, during his initial distribution of the handout, Mr. Shaw pointed out the multimodal nature of the TED Talk and began to encourage students to consider constructing their talks similarly. He said, “Look at how the speaker uses the media that [she] uses, because that’ll really help you all in your preparation. As far as the media, you can use [any] format.” This comment suggests that in using the TED Talk to foster the construction of critical texts that employ rhetorical appeals, Mr. Shaw also emphasized its multimodal nature and encouraged students to consider constructing their texts in a similar fashion. To further emphasize this point, he noted, “And the last thing at the bottom [of the handout, the question] asks us how the speaker uses multimedia.” Thus, in order to foster student Critical Literacy practices that *disrupt the commonplace*, Mr. Shaw presented a model text that used rhetorical appeal. Using the model text also served to scaffold the creation of critical texts that are multimodal in nature. Toward the end of the conversation, he asked, “What about her multimedia? How did she use multimedia?” When students responded by referring to the visual images, he noted that she used “pictures with words, but she didn’t necessarily refer to the words. She never said, this is a picture of somewhere in India . . . the pictures were just behind her as a support system.”

In sum, then, by asking students to analyze various TED Talks, especially focusing on the rhetorical structure of the speeches, their call to action, and multimedia

supports, Mr. Shaw used the multimodal text set to model how students might create and present a critical text. Because the TED Talks also served as an example of how one might *take action and promote social justice* and/or *disrupt the commonplace* they also modeled how this kind of text production might align with two of the Critical Literacy components. In the end, however, in order to fully explore the Critical Literacy components Mr. Shaw fostered, it is necessary to turn to the actual speeches presented by the students. In doing so, I highlight two TED Talks as specific examples of student critical text production.

Echo's TED Talk. One example is a talk given by Echo about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. In his speech, Echo, whose family immigrated from Palestine before he was born, *analyzed the sociopolitical issues* associated with the West Bank occupation by challenging the status quo of unequal power relations (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013). In creating and presenting the TED Talk, Echo also demonstrated how one student might *take action and promote social justice*. For example, at one point he referred to an image of the movie poster for *Red Dawn*, a film in which a group of young Americans fight back against an invading North Korean Army. While displaying the multimodal image on the whiteboard, he said:

Think about it like this: In this movie *Red Dawn*, North Korea comes to America. They try capturing, they try basically taking over America [Echo points to image]. These guys retreat to the woods and fight back. All right? They fight back and take their land back and they're known as heroes. Now [Echo points to himself] when Palestinians try doing it, we'd be known as terrorists.

This short quote demonstrates that Echo employed two kinds of rhetorical appeal to persuade his audience to take up a critical perspective. One appeal he used was ethos, or “ethical appeal based on the character, credibility, or reliability of the writer” (Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2013); after informing the class early in the speech that he is a Palestinian and, later, with gestures (pointing to himself while using the word Palestinian), he established himself as someone who has had “personal experiences with the topic” (Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2013). Furthermore, because his audience was made up of fellow classmates (some of which were his closest friends), his immediate follow-up claim, “we’d be known as terrorists” established a sense of pathos. In other words, Echo argued that the Israeli government positions Palestinians as terrorists who, as he argued, want their land back. Thus, because *he* (pointing to self) wants that land back, he is also positioned as a terrorist. Furthermore, because the audience is filled with friends, the suggestion that he is positioned as a terrorist also appeals to their emotions (pathos). To make this point more salient, after Young Esquire III responded by saying, “Intense. Intense,” a visiting student said, “whoa.”

This example demonstrates that Mr. Shaw fostered a Critical Literacy practice in which one student used rhetorical strategies to present a call to action speech. Mr. Shaw did this by familiarizing Echo and his classmates with the ways one might use rhetorical appeals to persuade an audience to *take action and promote social justice*. As such, in his TED Talk, Echo used pathos and ethos in an attempt to persuade his classmates to take up his critical perspective toward the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

Within the context of this discussion, it is important to note that Echo's call to action speech was also multimodal in nature and included new media texts from the world of popular culture. In the excerpt above, he used oral and gestural communication while providing an image of the movie poster to help make his point more relevant to this familiar audience. This suggests that, in addition to familiarizing the students with rhetorical strategies, Mr. Shaw's attempts at using multimodal model texts to foster the TED Talk as a form of critical text production appeared, in the case of Echo, successful. In fact, nearly every other student's critical text production was also multimodal in nature and included a call to action.

Furthermore, it also suggests that, in creating and presenting the TED Talk, Echo demonstrated how one student might *take action and promote social justice* in a way that is more active than if he had only engaged in a critical conversation. In other words, data analysis suggests the critical conversations in which students engaged were often limited to reflection on past actions and contemplation of future ones. Echo's TED Talk, however, demonstrates that when creating and presenting critical texts, Echo not only reflected on the past and considered future actions, by using rhetorical appeals to persuade his audience, he also acted on his critical perspective. Thus, this example suggests that fostering more than one Critical Literacy practice (e.g., the critical conversation and critical text production) may result in greater engagement with certain Critical Literacy components.

It should be noted, however, that Echo's presentation of the TED Talk was constrained by context. In other words, because his audience was limited to the

classroom, an opportunity to further extend his engagement with the fourth Critical Literacy component was missed. Interestingly, this is despite the fact that he had previously participated in public protests over Israeli occupation of the West Bank. During our interview, he described a time when he and his family participated in a protest the year before by picketing at a downtown location in the city where this study was located. While not the same as an organized protest in a public space, such projects as the TED Talk might be used as a springboard to other actions outside the classroom - such as letters to congress, or creation of blogs that call a greater audience to action. Thus, a pedagogic opportunity was also missed, one that might involve building the technological skills required to create various critical digital texts (Smith & Hull, 2013). While Mr. Shaw's use of the critical conversation and the multimodal model text set fostered a literacy practice that more fully aligned with the fourth Critical Literacy component, because he did not provide broader opportunities for calling audiences to action, it was constrained by the limited context of the classroom.

Caelyn's TED Talk. A second example demonstrates how students may also create and present critical texts to *disrupt the commonplace*. This example centers on a talk given by Caelyn, who called her audience's attention to the subtleties of racism. In doing so, she used still images, video, and oral language to "unpack social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces" (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9) and, thus, to challenge status quo understandings of race. As such, like Echo (and the artist who called on an audience to reduce plastic waste), Caelyn used multimedia to aid in her creation and presentation of the TED Talk. In the final moments of her presentation, for example, she included a

Public Service Announcement (PSA) that ends with a man shouting racist epithets at another man and then being hit by a car. Within the context of the speech, this final shocking image functioned as an appeal to the audience's emotions (pathos).

In addition to the PSA segment of her speech, Caelyn used oral language as a vehicle for rhetorical appeal. In her speech she said:

We all think that we aren't racist. But the reality is that we all have a little bit of racism in us. A University of Connecticut professor [who] has researched racism for more than 30 years, estimates up to 80% of Americans have racist feelings that they may not even realize.

In this excerpt, by stating that Americans don't realize they are racist, she *disrupted the commonplace* notion that racism is an overt act of discrimination. In particular, she noted that unlike those who argue they are not racist, she argues, "we all have a little bit . . . inside us." In addition, because Caelyn included statistics, she used logos as part of her rhetorical appeal. Elsewhere in her talk she also, however, *analyzed multiple viewpoints* by focusing on the voices of those who are marginalized. This is evident in one segment of Caelyn's speech:

Society has made these stereotypes around all different races and we've grown up with and accepted them as the truth. But if we are in that particular race we know what they are saying may or may not be the truth . . . I remember when I first moved to America and all anyone in school could focus on was how I was from Africa . . . they felt that I couldn't learn as fast or learn as much as the other kids because of where I was from. But I was the one who was making straight A's and getting all the awards at the end of the year . . . Even my parents are discriminated against. Once a nurse told my mother and her friends to be sure that they washed before they came to the hospital, because that's what we do in America. The fact that a 30-year-old woman could say that to my momma kinda makes me mad, but then again it just shows me how closed-minded and ignorant people are.

In this excerpt, similar to Echo, Caelyn appealed to her audience through the use of ethos (“I was from Africa”). In doing so, she also *focused on those whose voices are marginalized*. In this case, “the voice” is her own (and her mother’s), as well as other immigrants from Africa. In both of these examples, it is clear that Mr. Shaw’s attempts at familiarizing students with certain rhetorical strategies found in model (multimodal) texts fostered one kind of Critical Literacy practice—critical text production.

It is important, however, to also note that the nature of Caelyn’s speech begins to demonstrate how Mr. Shaw not only fostered a kind of literacy practice that aligned with three of the four Critical Literacy components, as evidenced by Echo and Caelyn, the TED Talk demonstrated how one might fully align with the fourth Critical Literacy component—*taking action and promoting social justice*. For example, at the end of her speech Caelyn displayed an image of an organized protest against racism and said:

Now racism has gotten better over the past few generations, but what I’m asking us to do is to try not to judge someone as soon as we see them, to push those stereotypes aside, and treat people how you want to be treated, and if you are being put into a category you should break it and tell them that you are better than that.

In her call to action to “try not to judge someone,” Caelyn “used language and other sign systems to get things done in the world” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 16). In other words, she called on her audience to push back against the subtle racist thoughts each of us has within us. In this instance, then, rather than being a spectator who passively receives the message of anti-racism, Caelyn acted on the world and, in the end, called on her peers to do the same. In sum, then, the TED Talk is an example of how fostering a second kind of

Critical Literacy practice might further engage students in *taking action and promoting social justice*. Whereas in fostering the critical conversation students reflected on the past and contemplated future actions, in using multimodal text models and familiarizing students with rhetorical appeals Mr. Shaw fostered critical text production through which students went beyond reflection; by creating and presenting the TED Talk, they *took action and, thus, promoted social justice*. However, despite this apparent affordance for more fully aligning with the fourth Critical Literacy component, like the examples presented in the critical conversation discussions above, both students did not explore how one might go about taking specific actions outside of the classroom. Specifically, these two Critical Literacy practices appear to be limited by contextual constraints. In other words, because the students' call to action was directed only toward fellow classmates, such actions did not demonstrate how students might call a broader audience to action.

The Media Analysis Project

A second kind of text production Mr. Shaw assigned to both the sophomore and junior classes he described as the Media Analysis Project. According to Mr. Shaw, the goal of this project is for the students to “look at . . . minority groups and how they are portrayed in media.” He noted that when constructing such texts, students might ask, “What is a narrative that’s . . . constructed about homosexuality in our media? You know? What about Blackness? What about, you know, being a woman?” Given his description, the project also provided opportunities for students to explore the ways various media might contribute to maintaining the status quo. Creating and presenting

the projects, thus, provided students with opportunities to *interrogate multiple perspectives* and to *disrupt the commonplace*. In order to foster the creation and presentation of Media Analysis projects that aligned with these two Critical Literacy components, Mr. Shaw used a multimodal (multigenre) text set in conjunction with critical conversations. Thus, as I discuss what Mr. Shaw did to foster this kind of critical text production, I explore the ways these student literacy practices converge to align with two specific Critical Literacy components.

Use of Multimodal text set. Like the TED Talk assignment, Mr. Shaw fostered the Media Analysis project by using multimodal text sets as models for critical text production. However, the use of multimodal text sets to foster this kind of literacy practice differed in two specific ways: For one, whereas the TED Talk text set focused on a single text genre, in the case of the Media Analysis project, Mr. Shaw used a variety of text genres. Specifically, Mr. Shaw used: an excerpt from *Custer Died for your Sins: An American Indian Manifesto*, written by the American Indian activist Vine Deloria; a documentary film called *Reel Injuns* about depictions of American Indians in Hollywood films; a poem by Sherman Alexie called *Poverty of Mirrors* in which Alexie expresses the complexities of living in-between two cultures; and a full-length feature film called *Smoke Signals* in which two teenage American Indians are confronted by racist attitudes when they leave the “Rez” to retrieve the remains of a family member.

Secondly, the text sets also differed in their purpose. On the one hand, the TED Talk modeled how one might structure a particular kind of critical text through which s/he might *take action and promote social justice*. In particular, the TED Talks provided

models for using rhetorical appeals as a way to call an audience to action. On the other hand, the multimodal multi-genre text set used to foster the Media Analysis project served to model the various ways one might speak back to commonsense notions of what it means to be, for example, an American Indian. Using multiple genres emphasized the multiple voices present in each text, which, in turn, presented various models for countering dominant Discourse worldviews. The texts, then, functioned as a multimodal (multigenre) set that modeled how one might present a counternarrative.

According to Giroux et al. (1996), these sorts of texts counter “‘*official*’ and ‘*hegemonic*’ narratives of everyday life: those legitimating stories propagated for specific political purposes to manipulate public consciousness by heralding a national set of common cultural ideals” (p. 2). The collection of texts Mr. Shaw selected for this particular unit presented an image of the relationship between two cultures (European American and American Indian) that counters commonsense notions of what it means to be a member of an indigenous group.

For example, in discussing the Vine Deloria excerpt, Mr. Shaw asked the students to “Go ahead and tell me what you think when you hear the word American Indian or Native American.” Having prefaced this question with a brief discussion about stereotypical portrayals found in the Disney film *Pocahontas*, it is no surprise that the students listed a number of stereotypical characteristics:

Lark: Droopy cheeks.

Mr. Shaw: Droopy cheeks. Ok.

Female Student off-camera: Moccasins.

Mr. Shaw: [writing on board] how do you spell droopy cheeks? Oh, moccasins.

Marie: Feathers, feathers in their hair.

Young Esquire III: Face paint. Long hair.

Shane: Wise.

Lark: That's what I put.

Young Esquire III: Spiritual . . . Very spiritual . . . Tomahawks.

After this brief exchange, Mr. Shaw asked, "Let me ask you a question. How many of you have actually met a Native American?" When Chuchu explained that a group of dancers came to his elementary school "and danced around," Mr. Shaw continued, "Why are these things the first things that come to mind when you think of Native Americans?" In answering, Nunu said, "TV," Young Esquire III said, "*Pocahontas* movie," and Shane said, "because of the media." As this short excerpt demonstrates, Mr. Shaw focused discussion on two of the texts from the multimodal set - an animated film and a persuasive essay. In doing so, he began to use the texts as a means to foster the kinds of critical thinking one might engage in when constructing a counternarrative. In particular, he asked students to first consider how those "legitimizing stories" might seep into the "public consciousness" (Giroux et al., 1996, p. 2). In their responses, the students demonstrated their understanding of how various popular culture texts might serve that purpose. Thus, in this case, the texts modeled how one might speak back to such dominant Discourse understandings.

Use of critical conversation in conjunction with Multimodal text set.

However, as noted above, Mr. Shaw used the multimodal text set in conjunction with the

critical conversation. In other words, in presenting the text as a kind of counternarrative, he also engaged students in critical conversations. As such, he used both strategies simultaneously to foster the kinds of thinking students might need to construct a critical text that served to *analyze (interrogate) multiple viewpoints*, in particular those that position certain groups of people in marginalizing ways. Thus, unlike other discussions in which Mr. Shaw positioned the critical conversation as the end goal, in this case he used the critical conversation to foster a second literacy practice - the construction and presentation of a critical text. He did this by focusing conversations on concepts related to stereotypical portrayals of certain cultural groups. For example, after having read excerpts from the Vine Deloria piece (and having referenced a popular culture text - *Pocahontas*) Mr. Shaw and his students, together, interrogated dominant Discourse understandings of what it means to be an American Indian through the *analysis of multiple viewpoints*. In other words, while focusing on those whose voices are often marginalized, they critiqued the stereotypical (dominant Discourse) notion of American Indian-ness perpetuated by the “bias” found in “the media.” Perhaps to emphasize this point, Mr. Shaw continued his discussion of Disney’s *Pocahontas*:

Mr. Shaw: Because of the media. *Pocahontas*, cartoons. Right . . . so, media in a nutshell. Films, television, give us these images. Now, what is the danger, if you will, in simply having media create the narrative of who . . .

Young Esquire III: They could be biased.

Mr. Shaw: . . . you are. Hunh?

Young Esquire III: They could be biased, or not really know much. They could be going off of what they also heard from the media from their past experience.

Mr. Shaw: Ok, so, there's bias from the media. The media's slanted, ok. It's gonna show us what they want to show us. Right, what else?
[6 sec pause]

Shane: Stereotypes.

Mr. Shaw: Stereotypes . . .

Shane: Could be negative.

This exchange demonstrates how Mr. Shaw's use of the critical conversation served to foster the kinds of thinking students might draw on when constructing and presenting critical texts, especially those that focused on the media's propagation of "legitimizing stories" (Giroux et al., 2013, p. 2). In response, the students demonstrated their understanding of the role various media might play in positioning certain groups in negative ways. Young Esquire III commented that the media "could be biased" and Shane added that they present "negative stereotypes."

As the discussion continued, Mr. Shaw summed up the conversation by referencing Vine Deloria's argument:

As . . . people from Italy, from Ireland, what have you, come into America as immigrants they have a period of time when they are, uh, manipulated, when they are suppressed, where they lack opportunity and access . . . The thing with Native Americans, though, is that they are invisible to us . . .

Over the next two days, Mr. Shaw continued to use the multimodal multi-genre text set along with critical conversations to explore the concept of media bias and to ultimately foster construction and presentation of the student Media Analysis Project. As a segue into the discussion of the Sherman Alexie poem, for example, he said to the students:

Remember yesterday at the end of the documentary I asked you all about how media kinda, does media perpetuate stereotypes about who you are . . . like Gay people are this way, Black people are this way, but my follow up question to that is: does, do you feel pressures from the media that helps to define what it means to be you in a cultural sense, what it means to be a young White woman, what it means to be a young Black male, or what it means to be a young Black woman; do you ever feel that you're not living up to the perception or the idea presented through society, that society gives you, or is that something that's just a non-player in your existence?

Such discussions, within the context of Critical Literacy, may often center on recognizing and resisting (and/or taking up) the ways a text, or its producers, position individuals or groups of people. Asking how a text positions the reader as well as others (Lewison et al., 2002), serves to *disrupt the commonplace*, or systems of meaning that lead to such text production (Vasquez et al., 2013). Thus, by asking if students feel pressure from society to “live up to” commonsense understandings of “what it means to be” members of specific cultural groups, Mr. Shaw began to introduce the Media Analysis project. As such, he engaged students in a critical conversation related to the central (critical) understanding he hoped students would attain during the unit of study. As noted above, the critical conversation itself was not the end goal. Rather, it was used as means to engage students in the kinds of thinking they might need to successfully construct and present a critical text that *interrogates multiple perspectives*. As if to demonstrate her understanding, Angíle responded to Mr. Shaw's question about societal expectations:

I personally feel like you know the media shows us so much bad stuff about like Black people, I just try to like, I don't know, be different. Like we just show how illiterate Black people can be, so I just try to go away from that, especially like speech and such. You know, like the way we talk and things like that. You know apparently improper English.

In her response, Angíle not only demonstrated that she understands how the media perpetuates Black stereotypes, she also noted one way that she resists such stereotypes, by “going away from that” through her “speech and such.” She demonstrated how one student, in response to media bias might begin to construct a counternarrative, one that resists being positioned in stereotypical ways. Mr. Shaw’s use of the multimodal text set in conjunction with the critical conversation, then, prompted, or fostered, Angíle’s critical perspective-taking and, thus, suggested one way she might construct her Media Analysis project. After Angíle responded, however, Mr. Shaw furthered the critical conversation by presenting a personal experience that did not counter such dominant Discourse understandings:

I told you when I was in high school there was a period where I was like I thought I would dress like a gangster, you know what I’m saying with my ATL shirt and everything. I would say that definitely was my attempt to move up to some type of idea of Blackness. Um, do you think that’s the case, do you think that people do that now? Do we think about it in the sense of like trends?

In this response, instead of *disrupting commonplace* understandings of what it means to be a young Black man, Mr. Shaw countered Angíle’s perspective with an example of someone (himself) who struggled with media influence on how he presented himself to others. To further the students’ line of thinking toward understanding why such positioning happens, he asked about current influences (“Do you think people do that now? Do we think about it in the sense of, like, trends?”). Thus, as the critical conversation continued, both Mr. Shaw and his students referred to additional multimodal

texts to solidify their understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge and its relation to various worldviews that position some in marginalizing ways.

For example, both Mr. Shaw and Young Esquire III referenced specific new media texts created by popular music artists (e.g., Kendrick Lamar, The Black Keys) that get used to position certain audiences, as well as the Alexie poem (a traditional text) in which the poet explores the effects of such positionings. As Mr. Shaw read from the poem, various students interpreted Alexie's struggle with living in-between two cultures and its influences on identity construction. Young Esquire III noted, for example, that, "Young boys get stuck in the traditions and stuff like that. And they freeze up when it comes to traditional things." As if to further emphasize this point, Lark said, "The way I look at it is, you know how they took [the Indian children] and tried to make them American? It's kinda like, here comes the truck, and the kid is like, what?!"

Finally, after engaging students in a critical conversation in which they demonstrated their understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge and, thus began to "unpack the social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces" (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9) presented in the multimodal text set, Mr. Shaw turned the conversation to creating the Media Analysis project. In referencing the assignment sheet, he said:

I want you to look at TV, you look in magazines, you look in any kind of piece of media, the news, anything, ok? You're looking for, um, how [refers to bullet points on handout] . . . the media, commercials, advertisements, what have you, speak to or cater to certain individuals. What does it say about feminine-ness, what does it say about masculinity, what does it say about race . . .

Framing the project in this way served to emphasize the purpose of using the text set and critical conversation. Specifically, Mr. Shaw attempted to present the speakers' perspectives as models for directing the students' thinking toward what the media "says about feminine-ness, what it says about masculinity," for example. Thus, in sum, Mr. Shaw introduced the Media Analysis project by using a multimodal text set in conjunction with the critical conversation. The set served to model how one might construct and present a critical text that explores the ways various Discourses position certain cultural groups in marginalizing ways. While the text set modeled critical text production, the critical conversation provided an opportunity for students "try out" this kind of critical perspective-taking.

Over the course of the next three weeks, Mr. Shaw continued to use the text set and critical conversation as an anchor for fostering the students' critical text production. During this time, they continued to *analyze (interrogate) those perspectives* that position some in marginalizing ways and, thus, to *disrupt commonplace understandings* of "what it means to be," in Mr. Shaw's words, "a young White woman, what it means to be a young Black male, or what it means to be a young Black woman." In the end, students created a variety of projects that aligned with multiple Critical Literacy components. For example, Lark wrote a paper critiquing a *L'Oreal* print advertisement. In her paper she noted the negative ways the advertisement positions women. She wrote, "when you look at [the ad] your brain will unconsciously think, oh that cream will make me look like this. Or, even worse, I am supposed to look like that girl [in the ad]." In other papers, Nunu and Chuchu critiqued the way the media portrays people with disabilities and Catarina

critiqued an advertisement for a Disney theme park. In each of these analyses, the students *interrogated multiple perspectives* that position their audiences in negative ways.

However, perhaps the most powerful critique came from Angíle, who not only wrote a paper critiquing American media portrayals of Africans and African immigrants, she also created and presented a documentary-type video. In her project, she interviewed fellow students in her school (as well as friends and family outside of school) about the negative positioning of a specific immigrant community living in the United States. As such, her documentary demonstrated how Mr. Shaw's use of the multimodal multi-genre text set in conjunction with the critical conversation fostered the creation and presentation of a critical text. In her project proposal, for example, Angíle wrote that she wanted to create a:

documentary based off of how Africans are depicted in the media - television. I want to do this project because, being an African, people always ask me bizarre questions related to my ethnic[ity] due to what they see on TV, what they're taught in class, and etc.

During her 15-minute video documentary, Angíle conducts interviews with her classmates, friends, and family members to elicit their views on the ways various media portray Africans and African immigrants. Such a Media Analysis project, then, demonstrates how one student's critical perspective-taking got enacted through one kind of Critical Literacy practice. As the example suggests, Angíle constructed a multimodal text that served to counter the "'official' and 'hegemonic' narratives of everyday life" (Giroux et al., 1996, p. 2). As such, her project is an example of how a student's critical

text might *interrogate multiple perspectives* and, thus, *disrupt commonplace understandings* of what it means to be an African living in America.

In sum, by using a multimodal (multigenre) text set in conjunction with the critical conversation, Mr. Shaw fostered the creation and presentation of critical texts. Throughout the unit of study, he engaged students in critical conversations and presented multimodal text models that both *disrupted the commonplace* and *interrogated multiple perspectives* as precursors to the Media Analysis project. As such, he fostered student critical text production that utilized multiple modes of communication. The combination of image, sound, and text used by Angîlé to speak back to the negative portrayals of Africans and African immigrants is one such example. Furthermore, fostering the creation and presentation of such texts, in the end, demonstrates how student literacy practices within the context of the classroom, aligned with specific Critical Literacy components.

In discussing the findings associated with the first research questions, I have presented examples that draw on data from multiple class sessions, interviews, informal conversations, and critical texts related to two student Critical Literacy practices - the critical conversation and critical text production. In doing so, I discussed the ways Mr. Shaw fostered such literacy practices and the degree to which they aligned with specific Critical Literacy components. In particular analysis of data suggested that he used open-ended questions and (multimodal) model texts, drew on personal experience and popular culture texts, and positioned students as co-learners in order to foster Critical Literacy practices. It also suggested that he familiarized students with rhetorical strategies, and

used critical conversations in conjunction with multimodal text sets to model how, in constructing a critical text, one might, for example, call on an audience to take action.

While fostering such practices, Mr. Shaw also drew on his personal Critical Pedagogy as well as teaching practices related to a New Literacy Studies perspective. As such, I discussed examples in which student critical perspective-taking was afforded and/or constrained by Mr. Shaw's pedagogic decisions and by context. In the end, such discussions combined to suggest that experienced critical educators' attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices are complex and complicated by multiple factors. Data analysis suggests that certain factors appear to be related to the nature of specific Critical Literacy practices, especially as they connect with the ways students might take up various critical perspectives. As such, I now turn to exploring the second research question. In particular, I examine how students engaged in the critical conversation and critical text production. Such a focus contributes to understanding what educators might do to foster student literacy practices that fully align with specific Critical Literacy components.

CHAPTER VI

RQ2: IN WHAT WAYS DID THE STUDENTS ENGAGE (OR NOT ENGAGE) IN CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES?

In the introduction to this dissertation study I argued for the importance of highlighting student voices in research on Critical Literacy practices. In particular, I noted such studies hold the potential for informing both teachers' and researchers' understanding of student experiences in relation to how they make sense out of instruction. This is especially important when attempting to understand how youth engage in critical perspective-taking. As Allen Luke (2014) argues, "how educators shape and deploy the tools, attitudes, and philosophies of Critical Literacy is utterly contingent. This will depend upon students' and teachers' everyday relations of power, their lived problems and struggles . . ." (p. 29). In other words, in order to truly implement a Critical Literacy pedagogy, one must understand exactly how, through their day-to-day interactions, students engage in Critical Literacy practices with each other and with their teachers.

Thus, I now turn to the second research question. In doing so, I further highlight student voices as they engage in specific Critical Literacy practices. First, I present an overview of the critical nature of their conversations and text production. Then, I focus on two specific students, one sophomore and one junior, to highlight the unique ways individual students might take up such critical perspectives. In the case of Alex, I discuss his use of "dry sarcasm" during critical conversations. In doing so, I emphasize the

complex and, at times, seemingly ambiguous nature of his perspective. Interviews and personal email correspondence indicate that crude, sexist, and at times racist comments were not necessarily intended as such. In the case of Angíle, I discuss how one student uniquely positions as other. Through the construction of a counternarrative (Giroux et al., 1996) she speaks back to certain dominant Discourse understandings of what it means to be a second-generation immigrant. Finally, in each case, I discuss the degree to which the students' critical perspective-taking aligns with specific Critical Literacy components.

In relation to the second research question, two salient themes emerged. While the student literacy practices in Mr. Shaw's two classes aligned with specific Critical Literacy components throughout the semester, the students drew on multiple resources to engage in critical conversations and the production of critical texts. In relation to both themes, while Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices resulted in all students, at one time or another, participating in critical conversations and/or critical text production, Alex's and Angíle's cases demonstrate the unique ways individual students engaged in such literacy practices.

Critical Conversations

In discussing the ways Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations, I noted that he used open-ended questions and (multimodal) model texts, drew on personal experiences, and positioned students as co-learners to engage them in nearly every class session. In doing so, I presented data that demonstrates how the conversations he fostered aligned with each of the four Critical Literacy components. Here, I extend that discussion to further explore the ways *students* participated in the critical conversations and, thus, to

highlight their voices. As noted in the introduction of this dissertation study, highlighting student voices as they engage in specific Critical Literacy practices is particularly important because doing so helps both teachers and researchers understand how students negotiate the positions made available to them in their day-to-day interactions.

Classroom observations, interviews, and informal conversations suggest that as students drew on personal experience and new media texts to engage in critical conversations, such conversations, at times, also aligned simultaneously with multiple Critical Literacy components. As such, analysis of how students participated in a specific critical conversation incorporates a discussion of the various components to which the conversation aligned. Analyzing critical conversations in this way highlighted student perspective-taking as it got enacted in a Critical Literacy classroom.

One such example occurred during a group debate that aligned with three Critical Literacy components. Unlike those previously discussed in this dissertation study, this critical conversation demonstrates how students draw on multiple resources to engage in critical perspective-taking. While both debate groups drew on new media texts to advance their respective arguments, the pro-charity group drew on Maybell's personal experience with poverty (along with quotations) and the anti-charity group drew on their informal style of communication. Data analysis also suggests that while students in both groups *focused* their discussion on *sociopolitical issues* surrounding hunger and poverty and called on their audience to *take action to promote social justice*, the anti-charity group *disrupted commonplace assumptions* about traditional forms of debate. Discussing this critical conversation, thus, highlights the agentic nature of the students' perspective-

taking in that data analysis emphasizes the choices students made as they engaged in one kind of Critical Literacy practice.

As the debate began, Aylin (a member of the pro-charity group) presented their argument by reading from a script they had previously prepared. In opening, she provided the definition of hunger and malnutrition as well as general information on several charitable organizations. However, in transitioning to their main point, one group member, Maybell, shared a personal experience. She said, “Poverty . . . goes in hand with [hunger] because if you don’t have enough money to buy food then you will go hungry, and I have an experience.” As she told her story she discussed how her father lost his job and, soon after, how her mother got hospitalized. She noted that because they “only had so much food to go around for seven people” they had to accept charity from their church “and that really helped us.” After presenting her personal experience with poverty, she ended by arguing, “we need to stop hunger around the world so people can live, like kids can’t live longer than the age of ten, cause they don’t have that much food.” In this example, Maybell drew on her personal experience to support her argument for aiding charities that are fighting to end poverty. In doing so, she *took action to promote social justice*. After describing her personal experience with not “hav[ing] enough money to buy food,” she called on her audience to “stop hunger.” This example demonstrates the importance of teaching from a Critical Literacy perspective. In particular, it highlights the potential agentic nature of the critical conversation. In this instance, Maybell felt compelled to share her personal experience with hunger and poverty. However, instead of merely reporting on its effects and, thus, positioning solely

as a victim, she argued for fighting to end such injustices. As such, her participation in this segment of the debate highlights not just one student's voice, but also the agentic nature of the critical conversation. This is important because such spaces provide opportunities for students to reflect on how their own personal experiences might inform their critical perspective-taking.

As the conversation continued, Maybell's personal experience segued into the group drawing on two quotations and a new media text to express a critical perspective related to the sociopolitical nature of hunger and poverty. As she read her script, Lola said:

We have some quotes and we have a picture. One quote we have is, "if we have the money to kill people with war we have the money to help people" and another one we have is, "hunger is a symptom of poverty. But we need not to wait for an end to poverty to find innovative ways to end hunger."

In the example, Lola used quotes to express the pro-charity group's point and to emphasize their culminating call to action. As such, this particular excerpt suggests that their participation in the debate aligned with a second Critical Literacy component: *focusing on sociopolitical issues*. Specifically, Lola supported Maybell's argument by referencing a quote that takes a critical perspective toward the wars we wage. Thus, the first group took up a critical stance toward the unequal distribution of our government's economic resources. Furthermore, because the group helped to organize a clothing drive and urged their fellow classmates to make donations, they not only reflected on a sociopolitical issue, they called their audience to action - to join them in charitable giving that would, perhaps, benefit fellow members of their immediate community. This point

emphasizes how students might combine two resources (e.g., personal experience; quotations) to argue for *taking action and promoting social justice*; In other words, it demonstrates how students might use multiple resources to engage in praxis, or reflection and action on the word and the world (Freire, 1973).

In addition to drawing on personal experience and quotations, the group also used a new media text to further their critical perspective. As Lola shared the quotes with their audience, Maybell, who had gone to the teacher's computer, projected a digital image of what appears to be a child's hands, palms turned upward, holding a slice of bread with a heart-shaped hole cut out of its center. Gesturing toward the picture she said, "You can donate your goods to food banks and charities." Then she shared with the class details about the clothing drive and how students might participate. Maybell's use of the digital image, thus, demonstrates how the group drew on a third resource, a new media text, to emphasize their perspective and to persuade their audience to act. In fact, as the class waited for Maybell to access the digital image, one audience member said, "I bet it's a picture of a dying baby." Although the image the group selected was not as explicit as a "picture of a dying baby," it does demonstrate how one resource (the digital image), combined with two others, contributed to their multimodal call to action. Ultimately, in addition to demonstrating how the pro-charity group drew on multiple resources, this discussion also demonstrates how critical conversations may simultaneously align with two specific Critical Literacy components: *taking action and promoting social justice* and *focusing on sociopolitical issues*.

It should be noted that because the debate demonstrated how a conversation might align with the fourth component, it also suggests how certain limitations associated with critical conversations might be minimized. Specifically, in discussing the ways Mr. Shaw fostered critical conversations, I noted in the previous chapter that such literacy practices did not always align with *taking action and promoting social justice* and that critical text production might more fully do so. The debate discussed here, however, suggests that when the students engaged in specific kinds of critical conversations that limitation was, perhaps, further minimized. As such, data analysis suggests that providing opportunities for students to draw on multiple (multimodal) resources to participate in multiple kinds of critical conversations, at times, might also foster full engagement in the fourth Critical Literacy component.

While the conversation began as a traditional debate in which one group drew on personal experience, quotations, and new media texts, as it turned to the anti-charity group, that traditional style of debate changed to what Echo would note, is a “back and forth” fashion. In other words, the style of communication on which the anti-charity group drew more closely resembled an informal conversation. As such, while they used a multimodal new media text, the anti-charity group also used their informal style of communication to advance their argument. Thus, like the pro-charity group, the anti-charity group combined multiple resources (e.g., new media text; informal style of communication) to suggest that taking action should not involve donating to charitable organizations. Rather, it should involve in Petch’s words, “teach[ing] them or help[ing] them learn how to provide for themselves, so they can [solve] problems like hunger or

natural disasters.” Furthermore, because they argued how certain socio-political actions are ineffective in eliminating hunger, they focused on the big P politics (Janks, 2010) associated with the activities of worldwide charitable organizations.

To begin the anti-charity group’s argument, Petch walked to Mr. Shaw’s computer and logged onto the Internet. Once he was ready, Echo turned their attention to the website Petch had displayed on the screen behind them. As students viewed the website, Petch clicked on various hyperlinks that displayed in real time a specific country’s growing number of deaths that are attributed to hunger. As such, the anti-charity group used as a central resource a new media text by which Echo and Petch advanced their argument:

Echo: In America you don’t hear about deaths of people being hungry and stuff. And we actually have evidence of that. Evidence I can show you, it’s a website.

Petch: This website shows pictures of people who do die from hunger. You can watch this for as long as you want. At most you might see one in America or Australia, or Russia. Anywhere that is considered developed. Each person that pops up, his name shows up . . . While we watch this there has only been deaths in the Middle East and Africa. We’re not saying that there aren’t deaths from hunger in developed countries. It’s just way, way, less. Which is why we should help them develop. We should help them modernize.

Echo: If we were to teach them how to make their own food and stuff that wouldn’t be happening.

This excerpt from the group’s argument shows, like the pro-charity group, how the anti-charity group drew on a new media (digital) text to engage in a critical conversation.

While he clicked on various countries, Petch referred to both written and visual text to support their argument for, in his words, “teach[ing] them how to provide for themselves

instead of giv[ing] them stuff . . .” In this excerpt, then, Petch and Echo demonstrated how the anti-charity group’s argument focused on big P politics (Janks, 2010). Instead of giving “stuff” to the poor in developing countries, they argued for “teaching them how to provide for themselves.”

However, while both groups drew on new media texts, the way they differed was in drawing on additional resources to further convince their audience. As Petch argued against donating to charitable organizations, he began to critique the pro-charity group’s formal style of debate, which he called “artificial.” Instead, their segment of the debate would be, as Echo framed it, “real.” It would be a conversation that is “from the heart” and “back and forth.” In sum, then, in addition to drawing on a (multimodal) new media text (Internet website), while the pro-charity group drew on personal experience and quotations, the anti-charity group drew on an informal style of communication. Through a series of questions, the anti-charity group framed their interactions more as a critical conversation than a formal debate.

This point is important in the sense that, while it serves to highlight the ways students might engage variously in critical conversations, it also demonstrates how Mr. Shaw’s attempts at positioning students as discussion directors might embody what he calls “spontaneous sparks of thinking about how the world affects people and how people affect it.” In describing his personal Critical Pedagogy, Mr. Shaw noted that he wanted student literacy learning to take on a critical and “organic” form. In the previous chapter, I argued that such a form of learning can be found in the critical conversation. The example I present here furthers that discussion in highlighting how students use that

“organic” informal style of communication as a rhetorical strategy for persuading their audience to take up a specific kind of action. In particular, as the excerpt below demonstrates, Mr. Shaw’s goal of positioning the students as co-learners opened a space in which this group not only called their audience to action, they also, for the moment, *disrupted* a traditional (*commonplace*) style of classroom debate - even as their teacher resisted that disruption. After Echo presented a series of questions directly to the pro-charity group, Mr. Shaw attempted to redirect the conversation:

Mr. Shaw: no, no, no, present your argument and then they’ll tell you . . .

Echo: No, this is our argument, we’re doing the debate, this is a debate to us. We argue our topic and then we switch to the next stuff.

Mr. Shaw: You have to argue your topic.

Petch: We *are* arguing our topic.

Echo: We *are*, we’re going through it slowly like that.

Mr. Shaw: Ok.

This example not only shows how a group of students might combine an informal style of communication with a new media text when engaging in a critical conversation, it also shows how that style may align with a specific Critical Literacy component. Specifically, by resisting a traditional form of debate, the group *disrupted a commonplace* classroom practice. As the excerpt suggests, how the group chose to engage in the critical conversations was not what the teacher had intended (e.g., “You have to argue your topic.”). Thus, Echo and Petch appeared to, in Mr. Shaw’s words, “conflict, and come to resolutions and those types of things through the conversation.” This point emphasizes

the notion that supporting students in their critical perspective-taking may require critical educators to negotiate the students' goal for interaction with their own. It also suggests that, in drawing on new media texts and informal styles of communication to engage in a critical conversation, certain students may exercise various degrees of autonomy. In other words, while the debate highlighted student voices it also emphasized the potentially agentic nature of these kinds of interactions.

In sum, highlighting student voices while they engage in critical conversations demonstrates the ways students might negotiate the positions offered them by their teachers. Whereas the pro-charity group drew on personal experiences, new media texts, and quotations to present their argument, the anti-charity group drew on new media texts and an informal style of communication to present theirs. This is important because in watching what students do (while engaged in such practices) educators may learn how they go about doing it. Thus, in turn, we may be better equipped to open opportunities for such future practices. Ultimately, discussion of the debate emphasizes the constructed nature of certain literacy practices. Specifically, while it functioned as a critical conversation, it also embedded the new media texts and quotations used by the students to advance their arguments.

Such critical conversations occurred frequently in Mr. Shaw's classes. At times they were associated with free-write responses, at times with Paideia-style seminars, or, in the case above, at times, with a specific genre of classroom communication (the debate). Examples of such discussions include conversations centered on the racism surrounding an African American man (Daryl Hunt) convicted of raping a White woman

and serving 20 years in prison before his lawyers finally proved that he was innocent; a discussion of why the KKK burns crosses in people's yards when they claim to be Christians, which ended with Alesha explaining that they do this because "they don't like Blacks, they don't like Catholics, they don't like Gays, Lesbians, Jew[s];" and a discussion of our government's role in social issues related to immigration, in which Shane asked if "this country is also the so-called country of freedom . . . doesn't everyone have a right to freedom?" In each of these conversations, while various students drew on multiple resources to reflect on their own racialized or gendered experiences, they took up perspectives that aligned with one or more of the four Critical Literacy components.

Critical Text Production

In addition to *focusing on sociopolitical issues* and *taking action to promote social justice* as demonstrated by the anti-charity group, while engaging in critical conversations, the anti-charity group also *disrupted the commonplace*. Evidence of alignment with such Critical Literacy components was common during the semester I observed Mr. Shaw's sophomore and junior classes. Of the 81 class observations I conducted, student conversations aligned with these three Critical Literacy components a total of 56 times. In fact, not only did such critical perspective-taking get enacted during critical conversations it also got enacted during critical text production (25 times). Thus, while data analysis indicated that students drew on multiple resources (e.g., personal experience; new media texts) to create and present critical texts, it also suggests that in doing so literacy practices aligned with specific Critical Literacy components. The Media Analysis project is one such assignment. As discussed in the previous chapter, the

task of this assignment, according to Mr. Shaw, was for students to construct (write/design) a text that analyzed the ways, and degree to which, a specific popular culture medium, such as a television show, a magazine advertisement, or an Internet website positioned its audience.

In constructing her project, one student, Catarina, drew on personal experience and a new media text (a television commercial created by Disney) *to disrupt the commonplace*. Like the pro-charity group discussed above, she used her personal experience to point out how disparities in income might affect a family. However, the way she drew on her new media text differed from the ways the debate groups drew on theirs. Specifically, Catarina's critical perspective-taking was directed toward the system of meaning reproduced by the new media text rather than some other person, group, or system of meaning.

For example, in her analysis Catarina noted that although the television advertisement suggests Disney "would be a great place to be with family" the reality for many families like hers is that such an experience is not possible. She notes that her parents "want the best for her . . . but can't always pay for something they can't afford." These comments demonstrate how Catarina drew on her personal experience to disrupt the taken-for-granted notion that Disney is a place for all. As she continues, she notes, "When people advertise things like that it's a way for them to trick people into spending money they don't have." Having used personal experience to set up her critique, this second point suggests she then combined that personal experience with a new media text as a way to critique a system of meaning conveyed by that very same new media text. In

other words, she used multiple resources (personal experience; new media text) to direct her critical perspective-taking toward the creators (Disney) of one of those resources (television commercial).

In *disrupting the commonplace* assumption that viewers can afford to attend such a theme park, Catarina indicates she is aware that advertisers and the companies they represent don't always have the consumer's best interest in mind. For example, she notes that, although Disney theme parks might be "pretty awesome" some families can't afford to go and, thus, the persuasive nature of the commercial might ultimately influence them in negative ways. This example suggests that Catarina's analysis centers on the ways the advertisement constructs an experience (of Disney) that is not attainable for her family; thus, it *disrupts commonplace* understandings that Disney is a place everyone could (and should) visit. In particular, this demonstrates how one student drew on both personal experience and a new media text to disrupt an inaccurate image she believes Disney dishonestly projects. Perhaps because the television commercial portrays a version of reality she feels is unattainable, in the end, she notes, "I know how the world works when it comes to money. I'm not tricked easily . . ." As such, unlike the new media texts used by the debate groups, in Catarina's case, the television commercial functioned as the target of, rather than vehicle, for her critical perspective-taking.

In a similar critical vein, Lark suggested in her Media Analysis project that a new media text (a L'Oreal print advertisement) used Photoshop tools to alter the image of the model. The effect, she argued, was to make women believe that "there is always something wrong with your body or your face." She continued, "this ad just reinforces

the stupid idea that women are not pretty unless we wear makeup, wear heels, have smooth skin, etc.” Her analysis, thus, suggests that, like Catarina, during critical text production Lark *disrupted the commonplace* by analyzing the constructed nature of knowledge found in such new media texts. However, whereas Catarina solely critiqued the underlying system of meaning within a new media text, Lark not only did that, she also critiqued the use of the digital tools in reproducing that system of meaning. In particular, she notes, “you see a very young woman’s face that you can tell has been completely airbrushed, and probably a lot more Photoshop things.” In a sarcastic tone, she writes, “It’s called *Youth Code*, so you’re only pretty when you’re young? Well, thanks *Youth Code*, so when I get old I turn into a reject of society.” In this brief critique, Lark begins “to unpack social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9), in particular, commonplace understandings of beauty and age. In doing so, she draws on a new media text to critique that underlying system of meaning.

However, she also draws on personal experience. Later, she notes how social practices such as these have affected her personally. She writes:

This helps me in my life in no way but to make me acceptable to this main culture . . . sadly, I have had girls come up to me just to point out that I need to do certain things to myself so I can have “problems” fixed . . . the fact that they told me I had to buy certain things to fix my “problems” shows how much these ads really get to some people.

By drawing on personal experience to demonstrate the way “money keeps racking in for these people” Lark clearly establishes her critical perspective toward the effects such advertising has on youth like herself, as well those who are “old.”

Thus, in creating critical texts, both students demonstrated how, at times, they drew on personal experience and new media texts to resist, or counter, dominant Discourse understandings of attainable family entertainment and women's sense of well-being. In other words, they engaged in *disrupting the commonplace*. Examples such as Catarina's and Lark's are important to note, because they not only demonstrate how students might draw on multiple resources to engage in critical text production, they also demonstrate that, at times, students may direct such critical perspective-taking toward the very resources on which they drew. For critical educators, this point emphasizes one critique Burnett and Merchant (2011) have for Critical Literacy. As noted in the theoretical framework, in particular, they warn that using certain popular culture texts as the target of critique may cause students to resist taking up critical perspectives, especially when teachers draw on the texts the students enjoy. Catarina's and Lark's examples, however, demonstrate that when students, rather than their teachers, select texts for critical evaluation, they may critique them in ways that are personally relevant and socially critical. Thus, these examples demonstrate that highlighting student voices not only emphasizes how they may engage in literacy practices that align with specific Critical Literacy components, it also highlights how such engagement might be done in unique and complicated ways.

A second project that demonstrates the ways Mr. Shaw's students engaged in critical text production is one that required students to change their day-to-day lives in some way for a short period of time and, afterward, to reflect on the experience. According to the assignment sheet Mr. Shaw distributed for this particular project

students were asked to choose between three different options: “Clothes counting,” being “technology free for a week,” and “three days of silence.” Students who chose the first option were required to count every item of clothing they owned, to note where the item was made, and research the working conditions for those who made the items. Students who selected the second option were required to “choose one piece of technology that [they] are willing to sacrifice for a week,” and to keep a journal in which they reflected on how the lack of access to such a piece of technology affected them personally. For the third option, students were required to spend three days in complete silence (including speaking, texting, and listening to music). After their time of silence, students were required to visit a local Community Kitchen to volunteer as a food server. For each of the projects, students were also required to write a reflection paper about the experience.

In previous discussions above, I noted that this dissertation study draws on Janks’s (2010) notion of critical text production. As operationalized here, it includes those deliberate actions that lead to the creation of a specific critical text. “Clothes counting,” becoming “technology free for a week,” and engaging in “three days of silence,” are, thus, considered an initial component of the production process. Framing these projects in this way is consistent with New Literacy perspectives that broaden the notion of what constitutes literacy. Because they emphasize student socio-cultural practices associated with reading and writing, New Literacy approaches emphasize a literacy practices perspective (Street, 2003). In other words, literacy not only includes decoding and encoding, it also includes the socio-cultural practices that contextualize student interactions with and through texts, even if those “texts” might be clothing tags

that provide information on size, materials, and the location where the item was manufactured (Kress, 2010). However, extending the definition in this direction is also consistent with the ways such practices reflect a critical perspective. Thus, turning to Maria's clothes counting project, for example, demonstrates how one student engaged in actions (e.g., clothes counting) that led to reflection (e.g., journal reflections) that, then, led to more action (e.g., altering consumer habits). As such, Maria's project may be framed as a kind of praxis in which she *took action and promoted social justice*. For Maria, the clothes counting option not only resulted in a better understanding of how one might *take action and promote social justice*, while she reflected on her personal experience and, thus, her privileged position in the world, she also focused on those whose voices are marginalized and, thus, *analyzed multiple perspectives*. Because her project involves a social practice, it also demonstrates how, like Catarina and Lark, one student drew on both personal experience (e.g., purchasing and wearing clothes) and, arguably, a new media text (e.g., clothing tags) to create a critical text (e.g., Media Analysis Project paper). As Johnson and Vasudevan argue (2014), "through daily bodily repetitions (i.e., speech, gesture, and dress), we reproduce and reinscribe [certain] meanings" (p. 99). What this means within the context of this dissertation is that the clothes Maria counted and the tags she read functioned as a kind of new media text.

While she counted her 250 pieces of clothing Maria reflected her surprise in her journal entries. At the midway point, she noted, "As I was sitting in an enormous pile of clothes, I felt buried, I felt as though it was a never-ending cycle, and it made me start to question how easily I say I want this or that." This brief excerpt demonstrates how Maria

drew on her personal experience to analyze how she takes for granted her privileged position, especially in noting that she “question[ed]” her desire for material possessions. However, in her final entry, that initial surprise gave way to realization. She wrote the process helped her understand that:

I really need to start valuing what I have. . . Poverty is almost like a disease that kills thousands around the world daily, those [who] would kill to be fully clothed and fed. As for me, I take it all for granted.

Through this project, then, Maria began to reflect on the disparities that exist between those whose personal experiences involve having access to wealth and, thus, in her words, who have the “latest fashion and trends” and those whose personal experiences involve “barely hav[ing] enough clothes to wear.” By engaging in “clothes counting” and reading the tags attached to each of the 250 items and then reflecting in journal entries on that process, Maria drew on personal experience and new media texts to engage in a kind of critical text production through which she began to acknowledge her role in maintaining the status quo of economic disparity.

Like the April 23rd junior conversation, for example, during which Chuchu reflected on the disparity between his privileged position and the position of migrant farmworkers’ children, as she counted the clothes and read the tags, Maria began to question her personal experience associated with her purchasing habits. However, also like Chuchu, in her reflections she did not explicitly connect those experiences to the maintenance of poor working conditions in factories that produce such clothing. Although, in reading the clothing tags, she realized, for example, that her clothing was

made in “China, Vietnam, and Indonesia,” in her paper she does not explore her purchasing habits as a form of complicity. Thus, Maria’s example suggests that, when attempting to foster critical perspective-taking, the degree to which students, in fact, take up such a perspective may vary. For example, although in her journal entries Maria does not fully explore her complicity in maintaining economic disparities, in her written reflection she does acknowledge the economic disparities that exist between her life and the lives of those who produce her clothing. In reflecting on the benefit she got from the project she wrote, “many kids around the world barely have enough clothes to wear and I’m sitting here trying to keep up with the latest fashion and trends . . .” Thus, as a critical text, her journal entries and reflection paper demonstrate how drawing on personal experience and new media texts may contribute to one student’s critical perspective-taking.

In sum, then, when creating and producing critical texts, Maria, Lark, and Catarina all drew on personal experiences and new media texts. Whereas Catarina’s and Lark’s examples of critical text production noted above focus specifically on how various new media related to how advertisements position their intended audiences, Maria’s example demonstrates, albeit incompletely, how one student’s critical text production (focused on such new media texts as clothing tags) might begin to involve *taking action and promoting social justice*; by reflecting on her personal privileged experience she began to reflect on the world. Ultimately, whereas students like Maybell and Lola used their critical conversation as a call for students to act locally in ways that serve the poor in their community, for students like Maria, perhaps the more challenging aspect comes

in going beyond simply reflecting on economic disparities to acting in ways that reduce such disparities.

The examples above suggest that during the semester I observed Mr. Shaw's classes, certain sophomore and junior students drew on personal experiences and new media texts to engage in Critical Literacy practices. Such practices occurred in their responses to free-write prompts, during Paideia-style seminars, at times within debates, and in creating what Mr. Shaw called "action projects." However, while most students, at one time or another, drew on personal experiences and/or new media texts to engage in critical conversations and/or critical text production, at times other times certain students did not do either. For example, in some situations, students chose to draw on traditional rather than new media texts, such as poems or excerpts from speeches, to construct critical texts that aligned with one or more Critical Literacy component. At other times, students simply chose not to participate in a critical conversation or chose not to complete whatever text Mr. Shaw asked them to construct. As noted in the Method section of this study, Fear is one such student. Specifically, over the course of the entire semester, he did not choose to participate in any of the numerous critical conversations Mr. Shaw attempted to foster. In fact, the only time he did talk was when Mr. Shaw asked him a direct question. For example, during a critical conversation about what constitutes a terrorist act, Mr. Shaw turned toward Fear (who had not spoken during the entire conversation) and said, "Why [are they called terrorist acts] and, if not, why? . . . Fear, start us off." In response, he said:

Well, basically acts of terrorism are defined as someone using a weapon of mass destruction. And usually if it's caused by someone who looks like a Muslim it's definitely gonna be called terrorism. Or a terrorist attack. And like a true American, someone who doesn't look Muslim or anything like that, could do it and it wouldn't be considered terrorism.

Exchanges like this one are important to note. In particular, they suggest that not all students participated in critical conversations. Perhaps more important though, they suggests that, although certain students like Fear may not speak during critical conversations they may still *think* in ways that align with certain Critical Literacy components. In his response to Mr. Shaw, for example, he articulated the idea that certain dominant Discourse understandings of ethnicity and/or religious affiliation may position those “who look like a Muslim” in stereotypical ways. In his comment, thus, Fear demonstrated how certain students who normally remain quiet, when asked, might contribute toward critical conversations. In other words, like Fear, they may interrogate what they perceive to be a dominant Discourse perspective.

For some students, however, participation in one particular Critical Literacy practice was persistent. In other words, certain students participated in every critical conversation and constructed every critical text Mr. Shaw assigned. Furthermore, in doing so, certain individual students, at times, engaged in these practices through unique and complicated ways. As such, I now turn to two intrinsic (Stake, 1995) case studies - one that focuses on a sophomore (Alex) and another on a junior (Angilé). Each of these two cases demonstrate that although emergent salient themes aid in understanding the ways the students engaged in Critical Literacy practices, exploring the nuances of two individual students' engagement may enrich that understanding. In Alex's case, for

example, although other students drew on personal experiences to engage in critical conversations, his use of sarcasm complicated the interactions within those conversations. In Anglé's case, like other students, while she drew on personal experiences and new media resources when she engaged in constructing two critical texts, the text set functioned as a kind of counternarrative. Thus, in presenting both Anglé and Alex, then, I am presenting two students who positioned themselves in unique ways through the Critical Literacy practices with which they engaged. As such the discussion is organized according to Alex's engagement in critical conversations and Anglé's engagement in critical text production.

Case One: Alex

In order to contextualize how Alex engaged uniquely in critical conversations, I first describe what he said and did as he interacted with his fellow students, Mr. Shaw, and me. In doing so, I highlight the ways Alex positioned himself during classroom observations, formal interviews, and informal conversations. I then illustrate how he engaged uniquely in conversations that align with the four Critical Literacy components.

During the first interview I conducted with Alex he described himself as a "profane boy" who plays videogames, occasionally the guitar, and "sleeps a lot." When I asked him to elaborate on what he meant by being profane he explained: "I, like, don't see any problem using profanity at school . . . I do, even more so, outside of school. I don't see a problem with that." His statement was, in fact, consistent with the data I had at that point collected. Two months into my classroom observations, I heard Alex use profanity in nearly every visit I had made to Mr. Shaw's sophomore class. I also heard

him read aloud the day's text with a voice perhaps best described as parodic. For example, in a deepened tone, he pronounced each syllable in a seemingly random syncopated fashion while the class and Mr. Shaw periodically giggled and/or stopped to discuss the ideas the text offered or generated. During numerous classroom conversations, he sat at Mr. Shaw's desk and directed classroom discussions (while wearing a fur-covered hat with small animal ears attached). Once, when he had no paper, he used a plastic *Coke* bottle as a medium on which to write his (brief) response to one of Mr. Shaw's free-write prompts and then read it to the class in his animated voice. Although those free-write responses were often sparse or non-existent, his participation in the critical conversations that followed was central to its direction and often included the use of sarcasm. Such is consistent with his description of himself as someone who is a "very verbal person."

In fact, during our second interview, Alex told me that he likes to use what he called "dry sarcasm" because he likes "to choose the opposite opinion as everybody else." In elaborating, he said that he uses sarcasm in a classroom conversation when it appears that fellow students all agree with one side of an issue. If he also agreed with that side, he would use sarcasm to "reinforce" the opinions of those classmates he believes are on the "right side" of social issues related to "racism, sexuality, and gender." If he did not agree with that side, he said he would use sarcasm to "change their opinion." When I asked for clarification, he referred to a conversation he had in Mr. Shaw's class the previous day in which he said, "women are the root of all evil, and men are superior." The intended effect of this sarcastic statement, according to Alex, was to reinforce his

classmates' opinions that women and men should be treated equally. As if to clarify, he noted that "if it's about race or if it's about women, I'm probably joking." As part of his engagement in literacy practices, then, Alex's use of sarcastic verbal communication was context-dependent; for example, he said that, when participating in conversations in school, while he used sarcasm in Mr. Shaw's tenth grade English class to support his fellow students' "right" opinions, in another teacher's eleventh grade English class, he used sarcasm to disagree with his fellow students, especially when the conversation centered on religion. Such complex means of oral communication occurred during numerous critical conversations. In sum, Alex's use of what he called "dry sarcasm" to engage in critical conversations, further demonstrates how his engagement in classroom conversations was unique.

However, despite his frequent contribution to in-class critical conversations, Alex rarely fully engaged in critical text production, such as the TED Talk or the Media Analysis project. In fact, Alex rarely even completed assignments he found interesting. When I asked him which assignments he liked most, he described a video parody of the film *Mean Girls* that he, Echo, and Petch had planned to create for one of the projects Mr. Shaw assigned. That project never materialized. At the end of the semester, during our second interview he said:

I don't have the attention span or the motivation to apply myself in classes. I can speak in classes, but I'm not going to do any of the homework. I can do the in-class assignments, but I'm going to finish them in 10 minutes (if it's a 30-minute assignment) and it's going to be really poorly answered.

That is not to say, however, that Alex does not engage in text production. During our first interview he explained that outside of class he writes online “short stories” and that one story even totaled 700 pages. In fact, in his free time, he explained that he engages in role-playing, which, he viewed as “basically collaborative writing. That’s how I like to think of it. It’s basically playing pretend online.” This particular online collaborative literacy practice, which Alex has sustained for over four years, consists of creating narratives that combine Greek mythology and elements of fantasy through which he and his online friend assume the personas of “gods or children of gods.” Given his penchant for profanity, sarcasm, and creative writing, perhaps it is no surprise that the single written assignment that Alex did complete during the semester I observed Mr. Shaw’s sophomore class was a narrative he wrote outside of class about a homicidal “penguin lord” who murders his own mother.

Such literacy practices might suggest that although Alex described himself as an “ordinary teenager,” within the context of the sophomore class, his literacy practices were unique, especially when paired with his tall thin frame, shoulder-length hair, and fur-covered hat. In fact, one of the reasons Alex gave for attending the CTCC Early/Middle College was that he was bullied at the middle school he previously attended. He said that while he was there, he was “harassed because I guess I’m dorky because of what I do.” He also indicated that, in part, being bullied was related to being “a very open Atheist.” To this point, he recalled one particular incident in middle school during which his teacher “decided to bring religion into the class.” He explained that, when she justified to the class that she could discuss her beliefs about religion because “everybody here’s

Christian, and if you're not, you might as well raise your hand," Alex raised his hand. He also noted that when he was in sixth grade he "got jumped by some high schoolers" and "that wasn't fun." Characterizing himself as "dorky" and as an Atheist who lives "in a Christian area," suggests that Alex positions himself outside of the norm. Such positioning becomes especially salient when paired with the unique way he engages in critical conversations.

Framing his middle school experience in this way begins to explain why someone like Alex would want to leave his home school and, in particular, attend the CTCC Early/Middle College. During our second interview he said that the CTCC Early/Middle College is "a school for misfits and really smart people." In elaborating, he said, "by misfits I mean people who are bullied at their old school; they had to come here because they couldn't deal with social issues." For a student who had "social issues" or, as he framed it, someone who "was feeling too anxious" and, thus, "couldn't talk to people," the CTCC Early/Middle College, in general, and Mr. Shaw's class in particular, became a place where, as Alex said, "I don't have that problem because it just feels like everybody's just sort of my friend."

In examining each of the data sources, I began to understand Alex as a student who engaged uniquely in critical conversations. Whether it was through the free-write prompt, the Paideia-style seminar, or through some other means, whenever Mr. Shaw attempted to foster student critical conversations Alex was sure to participate. In fact, his sarcasm and humor frequently directed such conversations. Thus, in considering the second research question, it is clear that Alex's participation in one kind of literacy

practice, the critical conversation, serves as a unique case (Stake, 1995). In other words, even though Mr. Shaw fostered most students' engagement in critical conversations, the way Alex engaged in this literacy practice was, within the context of this classroom, unlike any of his peers.

Alex's Engagement in Critical Conversations

Alex drew on his unique (sarcastic) style of communication to participate in nearly every discussion that took place in his class. In order to contextualize such participation, I now explore how he engaged consistently and uniquely in critical conversations. I also discuss how such engagement aligned with specific Critical Literacy components (e.g., *analysis of multiple viewpoints; disruption of the commonplace*). As Alex explained to me the ways he positioned himself outside the norm, such descriptions were often confirmed during classroom observations in which other students positioned him in this way as well.

For example, during one Paideia-style seminar focused on "the most important characteristic of a just man," certain students noted that a just man is one who forgives. When Caelyn asked if a just man would forgive someone who "killed [his] mother," Alex's answer, suggested, instead, that he, personally, would "commend" someone who lied about committing that kind of violent act. In response, Caelyn told him, "Any normal person wouldn't think like [that]. You're not normal." After Alex asked her to "define normal" and she replied, "not Alex," he responded with "that's a good definition." Such a straightforward exchange is consistent with discussions Alex and I

had about who he is as a student, as well as with data generated by critical conversations about gender roles in society.

During such conversations, it appeared that, at times, Alex took up a perspective that reinforced gender stereotypes. In one class session, for example, Mr. Shaw asked students to analyze print advertisements for their stereotypical images. Once they had located examples in various magazines, they shared what they noticed about the way the advertisements positioned certain groups of people. After Lola shared a perfume advertisement she found in *People Magazine*, Mr. Shaw asked, “What about the physical appearance of the [model] in your ad?” In response, Alex interjected, “She’s hot!” At that point, Young Esquire III asked, “Are you gonna try to tell us that [beauty] is corruptible?” As if ignoring his question, Alex further characterized the model by shouting, “bang-able!” One might read Alex’s one-word exclamations as stereotypically sexist reactions to the advertisement. Indeed, his remark seemed to prompt from Mr. Shaw an incredulous reaction consistent with such a reading. In response, Mr. Shaw asked, “Bang-able?” Then, shaking his head in apparent disagreement, he continued, “So Lola has shown that there are [cologne] samples . . . You get that kind of, you know, target, but also there seems to be some type of subliminal [message]. If you want to smell like this . . .” As Mr. Shaw’s voice trailed off, Lola exclaimed, “wear this [cologne]!” This exchange suggests that, although Mr. Shaw’s gesture (e.g., shaking his head) seemed to convey his disapproval of Alex’s comment, his remark, on the other hand, suggested that he also interpreted Alex’s exclamation as a criticism of the advertisement. Even though he appeared to question Alex’s choice of words, his

response was to note that the advertisement contains some kind of “subliminal” message. In fact, despite the sexist nature of Alex’s remark, its apparent effect was to trigger a response from Lola that, in combination with Mr. Shaw’s comment, further uncovered the potential motives of the text’s creator; Mr. Shaw referred the class to the idea of a target audience, while Lola exposed the ad’s persuasive purpose.

Conversations like these suggest that when Critical Literacy educators attempt to foster a dialogic atmosphere in their classrooms, students may (appear to) take up un-hoped-for positions. In other words, students like Alex might, in fact, voice marginalizing perspectives the teacher hoped they would counter. In this example, Alex engaged uniquely in a conversation designed by Mr. Shaw to foster student critical perspective-taking. Through crude sexist remarks, he instead seemed to take up an unintended (opposite) perspective. Given Alex’s comments in our interview, however, one might wonder if such a stereotypical outburst was, in fact, one of those examples Alex characterized as his use of “dry sarcasm” in order to, in his words, “[comment] on things that are obvious but . . . still a political problem today, like racism, sexuality and gender.” At best, then, analysis of the degree to which Alex took up a critical perspective with respect to gender roles, suggests that in this case, the meanings behind his comments were ambiguous. It is important to note, on the other hand, that despite their ambiguous nature, the responses they elicited from Mr. Shaw and Lola were not. Thus, if Alex were indeed intending to use dry sarcasm in this instance, then he appeared to achieve his desired result, to “reinforce [Lola’s] opinion.” After he noted that the model was “bang-able” Lola (a student who rarely participated in critical conversations) explained that she

believed the advertisement suggested that if you “wear this [cologne, it] will change you.”

To make this point more salient, Lola’s initial interpretation of the advertisement’s message did not appear to demonstrate that she held a critical perspective toward the advertisement. She noted, “[the advertisement] is saying that both women and men smell good. I guess.” However, after Alex shouted that the advertisement’s message is that the model is “bang-able,” Lola pointed out how such new media texts might influence an audience’s thinking toward believing a particular product “might change you.” In comparing then, Lola’s initial interpretation with her final one, the example suggests that she took on a more critical perspective toward the advertisement after Alex made his comment. Ultimately, then, Alex’s comment not only appeared to supported Lola’s “right” opinion, it also contributed to a conversation that *disrupted the commonplace*. In critiquing the advertisement, Lola (and Alex) unpacked a “social practice” (wearing cologne) “that perpetuated” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9) the idea that a beauty product “might change” us. Thus, taking into consideration how Alex characterized his use of dry sarcasm, this excerpt, in particular, also demonstrates how a student’s unique engagement in a conversation might align with specific Critical Literacy components.

A second example taken from a previous class session during the same unit of study serves to further highlight the ambiguous nature of Alex’s perspective and to suggest that one student’s unique engagement in classroom interactions aligned with an additional Critical Literacy component. As discussed above, in the previous week, Mr.

Shaw assigned class debates related to sociopolitical topics. In these debates, while certain groups appeared to draw on new media texts to make their arguments, others, such as Alex's, appeared to use a more conversational style. During the debate, which focused on whether women in the Middle East should protest for their immediate granting of equal rights, one group suggested, as Caelyn argued, that women should "take things one step at a time." As she read from her prepared texts, she noted, "If the women of the Middle East try to obtain their rights too quickly even if they are well-deserved they will not; it will only further up-rile the people who don't agree with their cause." Although Caelyn's group advocated for women's equal rights, they cautioned against proceeding with a sense of urgency. To support this argument, Jax, another member of the group, referred to Booker T. Washington's advocacy of Civil Rights, or, as Jax characterized it, his fight to "slowly build their way up to Whites." In response, Alex and his group agreed that women should be granted equal rights. But, whereas Jax and Caelyn's group drew on their prepared text to argue for a more passive approach, with no text in hand, Alex (and his group) argued for a more immediate and active approach. For example, at one point, Alex said:

I feel like, if you waited, there would be a lot smaller acts of violence . . . it would take a lot longer and it would build up to be even more violent than even one great act of a reformation in women's rights.

This particular example demonstrates that during a two-week period, Alex first took up a critical perspective toward stereotypical gender roles in society by arguing for the immediate granting of women's rights. In fact, in the debate, he even positioned women

politicians as powerful difference-makers. He argued, “Women politicians can also help a nation in chaos, considering it’s a rebellion and like half their people don’t even have a say in what happens.” Similar to the example above, Alex’s response appeared to align with a specific Critical Literacy component. In this case, his argument for women’s rights served to challenge the status quo of unequal power relations and, thus, to *focus on sociopolitical issues*. Additionally, because the sociopolitical issue focused on disrupting a system of meaning that positions women in marginalizing ways, his comments also began to *disrupt the commonplace*.

In the second week, however, Alex appeared to resist that critical perspective by positioning women as “bang-able” objects of sexual desire. Apparent contradictions such as these might suggest that as teachers attempt to foster critical conversations, individual students may at times take up and at other times resist critical perspectives. Furthermore, for Alex, the perspective he projects at any given moment may not, in fact, reflect his beliefs, critical or not, about social justice issues. In other words, because he uses “dry sarcasm” to “reinforce” his fellow students’ critical perspectives, crude sexist remarks such as the ones he made during the second week of the gender roles unit may, in fact, have been his way of “choosing the opposite opinion as everybody else in the classroom, because everyone else is pretty much like on the straight, or the right path.”

Inconsistencies such as these are important to discuss when exploring how one student engages in critical conversations within a classroom context. Specifically, this example demonstrates that student critical perspective-taking within such conversations may take on unique and complicated forms. As analysis of the various data sources related to

Alex's case suggests, exploring in detail what Alex said in class, in relation to his interpretation of such comments, provides a more nuanced understanding of one student's Critical Literacy practices. Given that Critical Literacy educators such as Mr. Shaw often attempt to foster a dialogic classroom (in which students are positioned as co-learners), such a nuanced understanding may help inform their practice and, thus, contribute to their attempts at fostering student agency. Ultimately, such a discussion highlights the notion that student Critical Literacy practices are often context-dependent, socially constructed, and, thus, often in flux and unpredictable. Alex's description in our second interview of how he takes on one perspective in Mr. Shaw's class and the opposite perspective in his Eleventh grade English class is consistent with this notion.

In that second interview, Alex and I further discussed his use of dry sarcasm. In elaborating on a discussion in Mr. Shaw's classroom about gender and race, he clarified his comment that "women are the root of all evil." He said that, "It's a joke for the most part." In response, I noted that in the same class session, he also asked Mr. Shaw why "[White people] couldn't say 'White power,' but Black people can say 'Black power.'" When I asked him to also clarify this statement, he answered, "I just wanted to see what Mr. Shaw would say about it." Alex noted that he was surprised at Mr. Shaw's lengthy discussion about "how 'White power' has a different meaning than 'Black power.'" When I asked him what he thought of that response, Alex said he was expecting Mr. Shaw to "make a joke" and, when he didn't, Alex thought to himself, "I kind of knew all of this, I shouldn't have asked but, oh well."

Interestingly, when returning to the transcript of that particular class session, as the conversation continued, Alex seemed to speak with that dry sarcasm he had described in our second interview. Consistent with the many other instances in which he used open-ended questions to foster student critical perspective-taking, Mr. Shaw asked, “So why don’t *you* tell *me* . . . how come Black people can say ‘Black power’ and you can’t say ‘White power?’” Without hesitation, Alex laughed and answered, “Because White people are supreme and we just don’t want to tell other people about it . . . nobody likes a braggart.” Such a statement, again, might suggest that Alex, in fact, harbors explicitly racist views about power relations and that, during critical conversations, he maintains such views. If this is the case, then, with respect to this one student, Mr. Shaw’s attempts at fostering Critical Literacy practices appeared to be unsuccessful. However, it is important to consider such comments as those made in our interview. When I asked Alex if he discusses social issues outside of class he explained:

If somebody’s sort of acting out on [their racist views] I’ll act out with them but I’ll make sure it’s really obvious I’m being very sarcastic so they know that what they’re doing is wrong and it’s obvious they’re wrong; that way they don’t really get offended by it but they get the point.

In clarifying, he noted that his friends sometimes “act pretty racist, but I’m pretty sure they’re not all racist. I don’t know. I got judged pretty hard when I dated a Black girl for like four months.” Such a comment highlights the unique and complicated nature of Alex’s critical perspective-taking. In other words, it suggests that when not in class Alex uses sarcasm, at times, to point out to his friends that their racist views are wrong. Such a rhetorical strategy, in his view, allows him to disagree with his friends’ perspectives

without them getting “offended by it but [still] . . . get the point.” This exchange between Alex and me also suggests that his use of sarcasm extends beyond the classroom walls and into the conversations he has with his friends when outside of school. As such, it emphasizes how his day-to-day personal experiences outside of school align with his interactions in school. In other words, in both contexts, Alex uses “dry sarcasm” to counter, or even interrogate, certain perspectives. Thus, in the end, his unique engagement in critical conversations involves *analyzing multiple perspectives*.

In sum, then, at times Alex’s use of sarcasm seemed to suggest that Mr. Shaw’s attempts at fostering critical perspective-taking resulted in one student taking up the opposite perspective Mr. Shaw had hoped for. However, because Alex characterized such instances as opportunities to, in effect, educate his peers about their “wrong” opinions, it may be that Mr. Shaw’s intended effect was, at times, achieved. Because of its ambiguous nature, Alex’s case suggests that students like him may, in fact, take on a critical perspective while also perpetuating gender and racial stereotypes. Furthermore, as Alex suggested, using sarcasm may lead fellow students to further vocalize their own critical perspectives or to rethink their “wrong opinions.” However, it should be noted that playing the devil’s advocate may also lead to students (and teachers) misinterpreting such comments and, thus, positioning each other in negative ways. Caelyn’s comment above, that Alex is “horrible,” suggests that, at times such interpretations may have been the case. Although Alex did agree with her that he is “not a normal person,” he did not refute her claim and, thus, did not refute the sincerity of his previous shocking comment - that he would “commend” those who lie about murder.

Ultimately, it is Alex's own words that best clarify, at least in part, the intentions he held for such remarks. In this case, an email exchange we had six months after data collection had ended perhaps best demonstrates this point. In response to a question in my initial email to him about interpreting his use of the word "bang-able" he said:

I would like to imagine I used that comment to both entertain my friends and elicit a response. It was definitely a sarcastic comment, and I probably said it because we were working on gender roles specifically . . . when discussing gender roles in media, most would consider women to be objectified, models specifically. Men are largely to blame for objectifying women, and my phrase would be what I imagine most people think of when this subject crosses their minds. In short, I said it to be ironic; I personally believe that women objectify themselves, and my sarcastic comment was used to reinforce that. I doubt many people actually got the point of what I was saying, and just saw me as a misogynist, but I'm sure that didn't and still doesn't matter to me. If anyone understood the point of what I was saying, I'd like to believe I at least made them rethink their opinion on the subject at hand.

Such a response is consistent with the comments he made to me during our interview and is consistent with the interpretation I present here. For one, it suggests the ambiguous, or even contradictory, nature of Alex's unique critical perspective-taking. For example, although he notes, "men are largely to blame for objectifying women," he also notes that he believes "women objectify themselves." Thus, although he appears to take up a critical perspective that *disrupts* certain *commonplace* understandings of gender roles, he also appears to reinforce those understandings. Secondly, it emphasizes his ability to critique popular culture texts for stereotypical positionings. Despite the ambiguous nature of his response, he noted that gender roles presented in the media function to objectify women. Thus, in focusing his explanation on media portrayals of women he further demonstrates how he understands certain social practices (e.g., print advertising) "are systems of

meaning at work in society” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9). Ultimately, such comments indicate that while Alex took up a critical perspective, the nature of that perspective was, at times, problematic. Although he claimed that his comment about the cologne ad was to “elicit a response” to the “objectification of women,” the degree to which he *disrupted commonplace* understandings of such gender roles, was problematized by his other comment that “women objectify themselves.”

Taking this into consideration, Alex’s email response, in general, also indicates that it is important for teachers to ask students to reflect on, or analyze, their day-to-day comments made during critical conversations. Such reflections may help students further develop and/or clarify their thinking both for themselves and for their intended audiences. It may also provide yet another opportunity for them to exercise critical reflexivity. In reflecting critically on their perspectives students may take opportunities to extend, or even begin to acknowledge their own complicity in maintaining the status quo (Vasquez et al., 2013).

As indicated above, Alex appeared to focus on interrogating traditional perspectives related to race and gender in American society. Thus, his perspective-taking aligned with the Critical Literacy component *analyzing multiple viewpoints*. His use of dry sarcasm, in particular, to challenge his fellow students whose perspectives may perpetuate stereotypes is but one unique example of how one such student goes about doing this within the context of the critical conversation. Because he challenged these views, his perspective-taking, albeit within a limited context, also began to align with a second Critical Literacy component *disrupting the commonplace*. In other words, Alex ‘s

response to his fellow classmates' "wrong" opinions, reflected a critical (and, at times, problematic) view toward certain systems of meaning that position some groups in marginalizing ways. However, despite his unique and constant participation in critical conversations, he rarely participated in other Critical Literacy practices. Even when Mr. Shaw used the critical conversation as a way to foster critical text production, for example, his participation was nearly non-existent. Thus, in order to explore how one student engages uniquely in critical text production, I now turn to Angilé.

Case Two: Angilé

Whereas Alex's case serves as an example of how one student draws on a unique style of communication to participate in critical conversations, Angilé's case demonstrates how another student draws on personal experience and new media texts to engage in the process of critical text production as a way to reflect and act on the complexities of her day-to-day interactions. During in-class observations, in the work she produced, and in the two interviews I conducted with her, Angilé consistently positioned herself and her family outside the cultural norms of American society; as a second-generation immigrant from Ivory Coast, she constructed an identity that was distinct from and, yet, complicated by dominant Discourse (American) understandings of race and culture. As noted above, identity as it is used here is understood to be fluid, multiple, and constantly in flux (Gee, 2005; Holland et al., 2001). Thus, it is context-dependent and, as such, constantly being constructed.

For example, early in the semester, during one classroom conversation that centered on race, Angilé described her parents' perception of "Blackness" in America.

She said that when they came to the United States, her father worked in New York City as a taxi driver. In reflecting on that time in their lives she told the class that her mother “was, like, oh my god, America is so corrupt, all these Black people are so dangerous!”

During that exchange, as if interviewing her, Mr. Shaw replied:

When people see you they must assume that you're like any other [African American], like, before they get to talk to you and get to know you. So, to hear that there's a perception of Blackness from Black Africans is really interesting.

In extending this point, Angilé replied, “African Americans have such a negative perception of Africans and Africans have a negative perception of Americans, well Blacks in general, and White people too . . .” In her story and in her response to Mr. Shaw, Angilé, thus, explained not only the ways she and her mother position themselves as other, she also suggested that just because one may position in this way, does not mean s/he will resist positioning members of other cultural communities (who may also experience marginalization) in similar stereotypical ways. Thus, her comments reflect the complexities of her and her family's experiences as first- and second-generation immigrants.

Angilé made similar comments throughout the semester through which she drew on her personal experiences to construct an identity as other (than African American), comments that also served to complicate her experience as a second-generation immigrant. In a class conversation toward the end of the semester, for example, she described her experiences in communicating with patrons at her mother's hair salon. As she framed it, certain patrons often wrongly assumed she and her mother do not

understand how to speak English. Angílé said, “I would speak to them, I would talk to them, and they would, like, text someone, ‘oh I don’t understand what this African bitch is saying.’ Like, stuff like that. It’s horrible.” After Mr. Shaw followed with, “Really? Even if you speak English to them?” Angílé replied, “Yeah. Clear English . . . Don’t turn your brains off just because I told you I’m African.” In sharing this personal experience, Angílé voiced her frustration with those who position her not simply as an immigrant, but as an immigrant whose oral language skills are inadequate. Thus, although her day-to-day experiences suggest that others may also position her as other than African American, that position at times is a stereotypical one.

Descriptions of personal experiences she shared during class observations were consistent with how she described herself to me. In discussing the reading and writing she does outside of class, for example, Angílé explained that although she spoke only in English while in class, elsewhere she prefers to communicate in French. In our first interview, she explained that she has over 200 African followers on Twitter, many of whom she also follows. Most of the tweets, she noted, are conducted in French, which she described as her “first language.” While such tweets center on the day-to-day experiences of African families, they also touch on socioeconomic issues pertaining to Ivory Coast’s recovery from civil war. As Angílé framed it, “they’re restoring the country . . . like a lot of people are investing in [Ivory Coast] now. It’s at its highest investment peak.” In addition to speaking (and writing) in French and English about issues related to her family’s home country, she also shared that she is learning a Ghanaian language (Fante), which is where her “mother’s ancestors are from.”

Explaining her day-to-day experiences as well as her language usage, ultimately, informs my discussion of the ways Angíle engages in critical text production. Unlike Alex, whose case demonstrates how one student drew on sarcasm to engage uniquely in one kind of Critical Literacy practice, Angíle's case demonstrates how one student not only drew on personal experience and new media texts to engage uniquely in critical text production, she also used this Critical Literacy practice as a way to counter dominant Discourse understandings of what it means to be a second-generation African immigrant. In other words, paired with her critical conversations, her critical text construction served as a kind of counternarrative (Giroux et al., 1996; Solarzano & Yosso, 2002). Solarzano and Yosso (2002) note that personal stories such as Angíle's often feature the author's experiences with, and critique of, racism or sexism. Because Angíle constructed a narrative that countered commonsense, or stereotypical, understandings of the immigrant experience, it represents a kind of counternarrative by which she *disrupted the commonplace, interrogated certain worldviews*, and, in presenting it to her junior classmates, ultimately *took action to promote social justice* (Vasquez et al., 2013).

Angíle's explanation of how she decided to include her uncle in her Media Analysis project makes this point particularly salient. She explained that her decision to interview him came about during a "full blown conversation" with him regarding the African immigrant experience in America. She said that during their discussion about the "social issues going on and how people are reacting [to them]," her uncle urged her to tell others that she is African. She said he explained to her that her dislike, as she put it, of "being around a lot of Black people" was due to an "identity crisis" she was going

through. During our interview, she noted that, at that moment in their discussion, she decided to include the rest of their conversation in her project. As the documentary later shows, Angíle's uncle then proceeded to share his own views on what it means to be a first-generation African immigrant and how that experience is affected by various stereotypical media portrayals.

In sum, Angíle's stories about her experiences as a second-generation African immigrant told during classroom observations and in personal interviews with me suggest that she used such experiences to *disrupt commonsense* notions of culture and race. Specifically, in constructing critical texts such as the Media Analysis project, Angíle constructed a counternarrative that challenged dominant (American) Discourse understandings of non-dominant Discourse communities. For example, her final commentary for the Media Analysis project includes a discussion of the ways Africans are portrayed by American television. Within this final critique, Angíle comments that she "hates" the way movies and television present Africans as uneducated. In particular, she notes that Africans do not always have accents or wear dashikis. They are not always poverty-stricken and uneducated. Such a commentary demonstrates that, whereas Angíle positions as African rather than African American, she also resists being positioned through film and television as a certain kind of stereotypical African, a stereotype that is perhaps understood by the dominant (American) Discourse as commonplace. Because Angíle pushes back against this stereotypical position, like Alex's, her case helps provide rich data for exploring the ways one student *disrupted the commonplace* by engaging consistently and uniquely in one kind of literacy practice.

Furthermore, because her Media Analysis project functions in part to aid in the construction of a counternarrative, this particular literacy practice, for Anglé, aligns with a second Critical Literacy component: *analysis of multiple viewpoints*. In focusing on those whose voices are marginalized (African immigrants), she often focused on her own voice and, thus, emphasized the uniqueness of her position within American society. It is important to also note, however, that just because she positions in this way, does not mean that she passively accepts others' negative portrayals of that position. Her description of the interactions she had with the patron in her mother's hair salon as well as her final commentary in the Media Analysis project emphasize this point. Even though it is not clear that she resisted such positioning in the moment of initial interaction with the hair salon patron, it is clear that she does resist such a negative position when sharing the incident during an in-class critical conversation and within the final commentary in her video project.

Thus, when considering her *analysis of multiple viewpoints*, it is important to note that within both critical conversations and critical text production, Anglé demonstrated the agentic nature of her resistant voice. As Anglé constructed the American Dreamer and the Media Analysis projects, she constructed a narrative of her friends' and family's experiences that ran counter to cultural norms related to the American experience. Janks notes that, although critical reading has traditionally been the primary focus of research that draws on a Critical Literacy framework, critical text production is "central to the Critical Literacy project" (Janks, 2010, p. 155). This is because text production is agentic; it facilitates praxis, especially in relation to the ways one might reflect and act to

position oneself and others in the world. Janks (2010) argues, “writing and rewriting can contribute to the kind of social and identity transformation that Freire’s work advocates” (p. 156). Anglé’s American Dream and Media Analysis projects in combination demonstrate, through critical text production and associated critical conversations, the ways one student engaged in the kind of praxis Janks advocates. Providing safe spaces for students to reflect (through critical conversations) and then act (through critical text production), thus, fosters such opportunities. In the end, the resultant student-produced text, as Janks (2010) notes, is “a form of agency” (p. 156).

Anglé’s Engagement in Critical Text Production

In discussing Alex’s case, I drew primarily on the two formal interviews we conducted during the semester of the research study and, thus, classroom observations, short conversations, and student work samples served to confirm statements made in our interviews about his perception of himself and his Critical Literacy practices. However, in exploring Anglé’s case, I draw primarily on in-class observations and student work samples through which she positioned herself in certain ways. Thus, our formal interviews and short conversations served to confirm data derived from the participant observations and student work samples. Unlike Alex, Anglé drew on personal experience and new media texts to engage in both critical conversations and critical text production. In doing so, she not only *disrupted* cultural norms, or the *commonplace*, but also constructed a narrative that is counter to both African American and European American cultural understandings. This is particularly true for her critical text production.

The American Dreamers Project. As noted in the discussion of the first research question, at the beginning of the semester Mr. Shaw attempted to engage the junior students in a unit of study focused on the concept of the American Dream. During the unit, he and the students read from a text set that consisted of (often multimodal) counternarrative models. Each of these texts, in some way, ran contrary to commonsense notions of assimilation and immigration. As part of the unit of study, Mr. Shaw also assigned a project that required students to interview someone about their opinion on the American Dream. Like most of the students' projects, Angílé's featured family members as interviewees. However, because Angílé and her interviewees (cousin and mother) are members of an African immigrant community, within the context of the classroom, they spoke from a unique perspective. In fact, before playing the audio-recorded interview for her classmates, Angílé noted that she included "African music" from Nigeria and Ivory Coast, interviewed her mother in French rather than English, and that her sister acted as translator while her mother answered the questions. In considering this, and other such data, analysis suggests that while Angílé drew on personal experiences and new media texts to construct her American Dreamers project, she *disrupted the commonplace and analyzed/interrogated multiple viewpoints*.

The recording begins with an excerpt from a Kanye West song titled *Made in America*, which includes such lines as: "I pledge allegiance, uh, to my Grandma;" "Our apple pie was supplied through *Arm & Hammer*;" and "The scales was lopsided, I'm just restoring order." Such lyrics suggest that in selecting West's song Angílé chose an introductory new media text that is itself a kind of counternarrative. Thus, because the

song functions to establish an oppositional tone for Angíle's interview, even in her choice to introduce the interview, Angíle began to construct a text that runs counter to dominant Discourse understandings of what it means to be "Made in America." As the song fades, Angíle asks a question, "What is the American Dream?," and then responds, "I found it difficult for myself, as a child whose parents aren't from the US, to answer." This comment, combined with West's lyrics, emphasizes her unique position. While it suggests that, in some ways Angíle might identify with West's African American experience, in others she may also identify as other than African American. As she continues the introduction, she notes that she "will be talking to two people who weren't originally from the US to get their point of view to see how they feel [about the American Dream]." Thus, in choosing a new media text (the Kanye West song) and in framing the interviews with a question ("What is the American Dream?") and suggesting its answer is complicated by personal experience, Angíle immediately positions herself and her interviewees as those whose perspectives originate from outside both a dominant (American) culture and a non-dominant (African American) culture. In sum, then, Angíle's American Dreamers project emphasizes the notion that in creating and presenting a critical text, certain students "participate in ongoing knowledge production and generation" (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 11) that *analyzes* (or even *interrogates*) *multiple perspectives*. While Angíle's inclusion of the Kanye West song, in particular, speaks to that notion, it should also be noted that such lyrics, when paired with her (and her mother's) comments also serve to *disrupt commonplace* understandings of the American Dream.

Having said this, it is interesting to note that, during her short interview, Angílé's cousin, a second-generation immigrant, seems to voice an opinion that is consistent with certain dominant Discourse understandings of what the American Dream entails. In a positive, uplifting tone, she says, "[The American Dream] is about success . . . which is what every parent wants, no matter if they're American or not American." Angílé, who is also a second-generation immigrant, seems to agree. After her cousin describes how her parents immigrated to the United States and worked hard to establish their own business, Angílé follows with, "that's moving, that's the American Dream, she is living the American Dream. God bless her." Such a characterization is consistent with how Angílé defined the American Dream in a paper she titled *American Culture*. In the paper, she noted that the American Dream is about "being successful no matter the obstacles in your way." However, she also noted in the paper that she believes this notion is inconsistent with her and her family's personal experience. She wrote, "My family's idea of the American Dream is completely different compared to others." Framing her family's understanding of the American Dream as "different" suggests that although at times she appeared to reinforce commonplace understandings of the American Dream, she complicates that understanding by noting her family's experiences in some ways *disrupt* that *commonplace* understanding.

This might explain why she decided to interview her mother for the American Dreamers project. To begin, instead of introducing the second segment of the interview with American Hip Hop music, Angílé selected as a transition into her mother's interview an Afro-pop song from Nigeria. As the music fades, Angílé introduces her mother:

[My mother] owns a hair salon and has been in America for over 20 years. She is constantly going back and forth between her country of origin and America. I found it interesting to find out her opinion. [She] requested to speak in her native language, French, so someone will be translating for her.

It is interesting to note that in a previous classroom critical conversation, Angílé said that her mother understands and speaks English. In choosing, then, to speak in French her mother (and, perhaps, Angílé) has made a deliberate choice to privilege her “native language.” Furthermore, enlisting her sister as translator emphasizes Angílé’s notion that her family’s experience is other than the norm and also highlights both the complexities of that experience and the notion that while her text “pay[s] attention to . . . the voices of those who have been silenced or marginalized” (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383), it also *disrupts commonplace* understandings of the American Dream. In particular, her sister’s role as translator, or possible “language broker” (Tse, 1995), for their mother reflects the unique role many second-generation immigrant children must assume in their day-to-day lives, which, in turn, reflects the unique experiences on which Angílé draws in creating and presenting her counternarrative.

However, with Angílé’s mother there is one distinct difference. According to Angílé, her mother understands and speaks English, and she does so every day in the hair salon she owns and operates. Such choices, within the context of Angílé’s project, further emphasize the unique nature of Angílé’s personal experience. Because Angílé, her sister, and their mother all speak two languages fluently, the languages they choose to speak in relation to their audiences is meaningful - especially in situations where she frames her identity construction as other than the dominant (or even other than non-

dominant) cultures. This point is further emphasized when paired with her cousin's role as interviewee. On the one hand, her cousin, a second-generation immigrant, responds in English and enthusiastically embraces a traditional version of the American Dream. Angílé's mother, on the other hand, responds in French, and does not so much embrace that traditional notion—perhaps because, if for no other reason, she says (in French) she does not know what it is. When Angílé asks, “When you came to America how did you like it, did you think you were following the American Dream? Did you even know what the American Dream was?” her mother answers, “No, no, I don't know what the American Dream is.”

However, in the end, after Angílé describes her version of the American Dream her mother indicates that she believes she has, in fact achieved it. Given that I have framed Angílé's American Dreamers project as an example of how text production might align with specific Critical Literacy components, one might ask how such an interview, in which a first-generation immigrant declares she has achieved the American Dream, serves as a *disruption of the commonplace* or as an *interrogation of multiple points of view*? The answer to this question lays not so much in challenging whether the dream exists. Rather, it lays in Angílé's choice to construct a narrative of her mother - a female (rather than male) immigrant from Africa (rather than Europe) who relocated to the United States and created a business that has lasted for more than 10 years. And it lays in Angílé's choice to include one mode to frame her story (aural/musical) and another (verbal) to tell it. In other words, what makes this a Critical Literacy project lays in the answer to the question: Whose story gets presented and represented as truth, “by whom,

and in whose interest?" (Luke, 2013, p. 20). Similar to the stories in the multimodal text set Mr. Shaw provided for his students, Angílé has begun to construct a personal story (Solarzano & Yosso, 2002) that focuses on the immigrant experience, on those whose voices are often marginalized. Such text constructions serve as a form of agency in that they "enable us to choose what meanings to make" (Janks, 2010, p. 156). Thus, this kind of Critical Literacy practice also has the potential for serving as a means whereby one might reflect and act on the world. In other words, it holds the potential for praxis (Freire, 1973). To fully explore how such a counternarrative might serve as a means for students to *take action and promote social justice*, I now turn to the accompanying Media Analysis project Angílé created during this same unit of study.

The Media Analysis Project. In discussing the first research question, I described the Media Analysis project as an example of how Mr. Shaw fostered critical text production in his junior classroom. As Mr. Shaw told his students, one of the goals he had was for them to analyze how the media portrays, or positions, "minority groups." However, because the two projects Angílé created during the unit of study function together as a kind of counternarrative and, thus, critical text set, I return to the Media Analysis project to further discuss the ways one student engages uniquely in critical text production. As such data analysis suggests that in creating and presenting critical texts, Angílé drew on personal experience and new media texts to *disrupt the commonplace, interrogate dominant Discourse perspectives, and act to promote social justice*.

In her project proposal, Angílé noted that one of her goals for creating the documentary was "to educate people" so that they will "learn about [what] others said of

Africa” and “spread their knowledge with others.” Such a goal reflects her concern for the ways she and her fellow Africans are positioned in their day-to-day interactions as well as in the ways they are portrayed by the media. For example, in response to reflection questions Mr. Shaw provided at the end of the documentary, *Reel Injuns*, she noted that, “America only shows the bad sides of Africa and doing so, that’s all Americans know.” In the same reflection, in her response to the question, “How can we counteract attitudes and beliefs that reduce groups of people to stereotypes?” she argued that we could “show the ‘real’ side of cultural groups.” One way that Anglé chose to *act* on this reflection and, thus, to *promote social justice*, or to “show the ‘real’ side,” was to construct a critical text set that included a documentary-style narrative of her personal (cultural) experience. In framing Anglé’s production of these two projects as a critical text set, I draw on Janks’s (2010) and Morrell’s (2003) notion of critical text production in combination with Leland et al.’s (1999) notion of the text set. As noted above, Morrell (2003) suggests that critical texts “present alternate realities as they simultaneously critique the existing narratives that promote the status quo” (p. 23). As critical texts combine to focus on, for example, an overarching concept or Critical Literacy component, they form a set of texts through which students might reflect and act on or toward worldviews (Leland et al., 1999), in other words, to *take action and promote social justice*. Thus, in conjunction with the American Dreamers project, the Media Analysis project, titled “You Dirty African,” functions as part of a text set that draws on personal experience and new media texts to counter stereotypical media portrayals of one particular immigrant group.

The documentary centers on three central questions: What do Americans think of Africans and African immigrants; what do African immigrants think of Americans; and what role does the media play in perpetuating stereotypes related to these questions? In response to the first question, during the documentary one African American male student responds:

I like to be honest, I think about villages and huts, but really, like, Africa has a city and [is] just like any other place on earth, except like people may not be as sane in Africa because some of the things they've been through . . . but I don't look down on Africa.

In addition, one African American female student notes that television images portray Africans as poor and unhappy, but that the African immigrants she has met are “nice and happy and well-dressed.” The answers to this line of questioning emphasize Anglé’s purpose for creating the documentary - the need “to educate people.” However, it also emphasizes her unique position as other than dominant (American) culture as well as other than non-dominant (African American) culture. Thus, it begins to demonstrate how a member of a non-dominant culture, like Anglé, might engage in critical text production; through the questions she asks her African American interviewees she elicits various stereotypical responses that position Africans in negative ways and that highlight a need for such documentaries. As such, she begins to build a text that identifies, and later, *disrupts commonplace* thinking that positions Africans in marginalizing ways. One of the student interviewees above says, for example, “people may not be as sane in Africa.”

However, in addition to *disrupting the commonplace*, she also begins to establish a rationale for constructing her critical text as a counternarrative that *interrogates such perspectives*, one that ultimately challenges stereotypical thinking by presenting, in Angíle 's words, the "other side." Thus, the student interview segment of her Media Analysis project also demonstrates for her audience the need to *take action and promote social justice*.

In response to the second question (what do African immigrants think of Americans?), although critical in nature, interviewees' answers are similarly stereotypical. Instead of framing America as a "land of opportunity" where one can achieve the American Dream, her uncle, for example, responds by saying, "the word America means guns." When Angíle asks why do you feel that way, he responds, "Because I see every time people being killed by guns, drugs, kids getting killed at school." Additionally, one young adult African female says:

Before I come here to America, a few years back, what I used to see on TV, it's like good life over here. But it's, when I got here, I saw the reality. It's not really what I saw on TV. It's totally different.

Similar to the questions she asked the American interviewees whose answers position Africans in stereotypical ways, these questions also elicit various views that, at times, position Americans in negative and/or stereotypical ways. This point further establishes, and complicates, the purpose of her documentary ("to educate people"). In other words, because stereotypical thinking might occur across perspectives, at times, critical texts hold the potential for a broad *interrogation of multiple viewpoints*, including those held

by members of one's own cultural group as well as the ways certain media might influence those viewpoints. Such texts, then, also hold the potential for functioning as a means through which students might reflect and act on such viewpoints (including their own) and, thus align with the fourth Critical Literacy component: *taking action to promoting social justice*,

Having been presented with a rationale for challenging dominant (American) Discourse understandings of what Africa and African means, it is perhaps no surprise that, at this point, the documentary broadens its perspective to focus on how the media reflects the viewpoints of Angilé's student interviewees. As the video transitions to a starry background, a line of text (e.g., "this is what they show you...") crosses to the center of the screen, pauses, and exits. African music [probably best described as Afro-pop] fades in. Then, as the music plays, stereotypical images transition into one another. Such images include African children holding food bowls and looking at the camera, a village of huts in a desert, a man dressed in traditional African dress (appearing to be tribal), and a close-up of a thatched hut with one child sitting in the doorway and another sitting in front to the right with a stick in his hands. The music and images then transition into another starry background. The text "But here's the other side..." floats in the center of the screen. Yet another transition begins a second series of stills, each appearing for a few seconds and fading into the other. The series of stills includes: a shot of a what appears to be a beach resort with tall buildings; four women dressed in Modern African dresses; and a resort hotel with a pool in front of it. In addition to providing a multimodal response to the third question (What role does the media play in perpetuation

stereotypes related to these questions?) such use of digital images (along with a popular music) suggests that in constructing this critical text, Angilé, like many of Mr. Shaw's students, not only drew on her personal experiences but also drew on new media. In this segment of the documentary, however, her use of digital images, rather than written text, is central to the construction of a narrative that counters stereotypical understandings of life in African countries.

In sum, Angilé's construction of this critical text began, in the interviewees' own words, with stereotypical views that position Africans in negative ways. She then drew on personal experience and new media texts to frame a kind of multimodal narrative that counters negative portrayals of Africans. In combining still images, video, music, and written text, Angilé constructed a critical text that initially presented two different and contradictory perspectives. On the one hand, the African American students positioned Africa (and its inhabitants) in stereotypical ways. On the other, her African friends and family countered that position. However, while Angilé's documentary demonstrates that, like her classmates, she drew on personal experience and new media texts, it also demonstrates the uniqueness of her critical text construction. Specifically, unlike her classmates, Angilé's Media Analysis project served as a counternarrative. In other words, her creation and presentation of the documentary-style video countered both dominant and non-dominant Discourse understandings of Africa and Africans.

It is important to note that in challenging those positions, Angilé's friends and family, at times, also positioned American culture in stereotypical ways. Because they did so, this segment of Angilé's documentary suggests that such critical texts hold the

capacity for students to critique certain media for not only positioning audiences in stereotypical ways but also for influencing the ways such audiences might challenge those negative positions. In a Critical Literacy classroom, exploring this point is important because it holds the potential for engaging all students in analyzing the insidious and, perhaps, hegemonic (Gramsci, 2000) nature of certain media texts. In other words, by exploring how her interviewees also engaged in stereotypical thinking associated with television (e.g. “I see every time [American] people being killed by guns”), Angílé might further broaden her *interrogation of multiple perspectives* to include an examination of how such social forces maintain status quo systems of meaning.

As the video continued, the set of 14 images was followed by various other segments in which Angílé interviewed fellow African immigrant students, family members, and friends about their views on Americans, portrayals of Africans on television, and their firsthand account of life in Africa. Such a collection of interviews, along with Angílé’s periodic inclusion of contradictory images and commentary combine to create her counternarrative. Giroux et al., (1996) note that such counternarratives are important forms of speaking back to dominant Discourses; in addition to countering “the grand narratives,” they also counter “the ‘official’ and ‘hegemonic’ narratives of everyday life” (p. 119). As if to make this point more salient, Angílé saved the final comment for herself:

I think that’s ridiculous, like the way they depict Africans in movies is ridiculous. It’s stupid, it’s really stupid. And that’s where people get what they think now about Africans. And also with what they see on TV, which is also ridiculous. They always show the slums of Africa, they never show like the good side or, like, I mean, every country has its slums but for them to just show like the bad

part of Africa is really sad. Africa is beautiful; Africa is like really rich. Africa has like a lot of, they're really rich when it comes to, like, natural materials.

In this final comment, and throughout the documentary, Angilé demonstrates how one student used the Media Analysis project to speak back to American (media) portrayals of Africans. She first presented two contradictory perspectives on the African experience. Then, she interrogated one of those perspectives. In doing so, she drew on her (and her family's) personal experience in combination with new media texts (video, still images, written text, and music) to *analyze multiple and contradictory perspectives* and to *disrupt commonsense* notions perpetuated by American television. In the end, in addition to reinforcing this point, her final critique further reflects her identity construction as other. When arguing for viewing Africa as a wealthy continent, for example, Angilé says, "we" rather than "they" have abundant natural resources. This suggests she identifies as African. However, when arguing that the media has contributed to Africa's status as a continent of "slums," she says "they" rather than "we" get these images from television. In combination, her use of the pronoun "we" marks her identification as African, while the use of the pronoun "they" highlights that identification as other than "the people."

Such pronoun usage further demonstrates how Angilé drew on personal experience to engage in critical text production aligned with the Critical Literacy component: *analysis of multiple perspectives* (e.g. the "we" of African and the "they" of American media). This point is particularly salient when taking into consideration that the creation of her documentary counternarrative occurred both inside and outside the classroom. Although the documentary was, perhaps, limited in its reach beyond friends

and family (it did not get posted online, for example), it does suggest that this kind of critical text production holds the potential for calling on others to reflect and, perhaps, act to resist stereotypical portrayals of non-dominant cultures. In this critical vein, because she documented herself and others whose voices are often marginalized, she considered the question: “whose voices are privileged and whose are not?” (Lewison et al., 2002). Thus, Angilé’s media analysis also demonstrates that when creating and presenting multimodal projects focused on social justice issues, her literacy practices aligned with multiple Critical Literacy components.

Although Angilé’s critical text set suggests one way teachers might foster Critical Literacy practices that result in students’ *disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple perspectives, and taking action to promote social justice* issues, it also highlights one aspect of Critical Literacy that perhaps needs more exploration. As noted above, in presenting her critique of American television’s stereotypical portrayals of Africa, Angilé fore-fronted those whose voices are often marginalized by such portrayals. Yet, when answering the question, “what do Africans think of Americans?” the interviewees, at times, portrayed Americans in potentially stereotypical ways as well. What was missed here, then, was an opportunity to engage in interrogating one’s own perspective in order to strengthen that perspective. Similar to the discussion above during which student critical conversations fell short of examining personal complicity in perpetuating the status quo (e.g., see discussion of Maria’s clothes counting project) here Angilé does the same. Thus, in addition to drawing on personal experience and new media texts, students might also draw on research that suggests, for example, such negative positionings are

broadly experienced. By doing so, then, students may not only highlight the personal counternarratives of those whose voices are marginalized, they may also broaden the scope of their counter-position. In fact, during a critical conversation prior to creating her documentary, Angilé demonstrated her understanding of such complex analyses. As noted above, while discussing her parents' experiences of living in New York City, she noted that while "African Americans have such a negative perception of Africans" it is also true that "Africans have a negative perception" of both "Blacks in general" as well as "White people too." Broadening her perspective to explore how media stereotypes may influence even the ways one might choose to challenge those media stereotypes may help students (and their teachers) understand the complexities of "unpacking social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces" (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9). Ultimately, when considering each of the examples provided thus far in this dissertation research study, the degree to which students reflected and acted on the world appears limited to critiquing others; even when students engaged in literacy practices that did begin to examine their complicity in perpetuating the status quo, the context in which they acted appeared, in general, to be limited to the classroom. Such apparent limitations may suggest specific constraints associated with Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering his students' engagement in literacy practices that align with all four Critical Literacy components.

In this chapter, I presented examples that demonstrate the kinds of critical conversations students engage in. I also presented examples of the kinds of critical texts they created and presented. However, in doing so, I emphasized not just what they did when engaging in these Critical Literacy practices, but how (and why) they participated

in such literacy practices. As such, I noted times when students *disrupted the commonplace, analyzed multiple viewpoints, focused on socio-political issues*, and, at times, *took action to promote social justice*. Ultimately, in presenting two case studies (Alex and Angilé), I highlighted how specific students may engage uniquely in the two Critical Literacy practices Mr. Shaw most often attempted to foster. Such analysis is important because, emphasizing the ways students might position as they take on critical perspectives helps critical educators understand how students make sense out of Critical Literacy instruction. Doing so contributes not just to classroom research but also theory associated with Critical Literacy. In addition, the findings discussed in this and the previous chapter suggest certain limitations for practice and theory. Finally, it suggests, as well, certain implications for future research and for critical educators who, like Mr. Shaw, seek to foster Critical Literacy practices in their classrooms. Thus, I now turn to the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have presented a study in which one teacher attempts to flatten the hierarchical structure commonly found within traditional banking model classrooms (Freire, 1973). Mr. Shaw attempted to construct a learning context that is dialogic and, ultimately, democratic in nature. By deliberately positioning himself and his students as co-learners and by drawing on a broadened and ideological view of literacy, Mr. Shaw enacted a pedagogy that, at times, appeared to foster student Critical Literacy practices. With his emphasis on the critical conversation as a primary mode of classroom interaction and the social action project as the primary mode for critical text production, Mr. Shaw engaged students in literacy practices that aligned with four Critical Literacy components: *disrupting the commonplace, analyzing multiple and contradictory worldviews, focusing sociopolitical issues*, and, at times, *taking action and promoting social justice* (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013). Because data analysis explores both what Mr. Shaw did over the course of the semester to foster student Critical Literacy practices and how the students engaged variously in those practices this study contributes to previous research and theory on Critical Literacy.

In particular, this study adds to previous research in two ways: 1) by exploring Mr. Shaw's use of multimodal model text sets, it demonstrates how teachers might foster student critical perspective-taking not just with, but also through, specific critical texts;

and 2) by extending the data collection (and analysis) over the course of an entire semester and across two classrooms, it highlights student voices and the degree to which they engage in two specific Critical Literacy practices. In addition, this research study contributes to theoretical aspects of Critical Literacy research. Data analysis of specific class sessions suggests an interdisciplinary framework enriches understandings of Critical Literacy practices in that: (a) drawing on a New Literacies perspective opens spaces for critical perspective-taking; and (b) drawing on a Critical Pedagogy perspective highlights the ways a Critical Literacy educator puts his personal theory of literacy learning into practice. Finally, in considering how this study contributes to both previous research and theory, I conclude with limitations and implications for practice and future research. In terms of future research, data analysis indicates a need for: (a) more case studies that are longitudinal in nature; (b) more ethnographic case studies across classroom contexts; and (c) more studies that employ discourse analysis that broadly examine the various modes of communication associated with critical conversations. Data analysis also suggests implications for classroom practice. Specifically, it indicates that Critical Literacy instruction is far more than simply teaching content; and, because of this, even experienced critical educators need support.

Contributions to Previous Research

In the Literature Review for this report, I noted previous research suggested a need for more studies that focus on what teachers do to foster specific Critical Literacy practices. In particular, while some studies reported on what teachers do to foster critical reading/consumption (Bean & Moni, 2003; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Lopez, 2011), few

studies reported on what they do to foster critical text production. In quoting Morrell (2003), I noted that this is important because fostering such literacy practices might “quickly become about the business of social justice” (p. 23), which, in turn, might also foster student agency. In other words, such opportunities might assist students in resisting and/or taking up the various positions with which they are presented during their day-to-day interactions with others. Considering that their world is becoming increasingly interactive and collaborative (Janks, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009), this point is particularly salient.

Use of Multimodal Texts (Sets) Foster Critical Literacy Practices

Thus, one way this dissertation study contributes to existing research is that it highlights Mr. Shaw’s use of multimodal texts and text sets to foster Critical Literacy practices. In analyzing multiple sources of data, I noted that such texts served as examples of how students might engage in *disrupting the commonplace, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice*. This differs from previous research (Bean & Moni, 2003; Love & Simpson, 2005; Specter & Jones, 2007) in that it analyzes how a teacher might foster critical perspective-taking through, rather than toward, specific texts. For example, like the model texts, when students created and presented the TED Talks, the American Dreamers interviews, or letters to their state’s senator, they often called their audiences to act on issues related, for example, to racism.

As noted in the findings section, Mr. Shaw used popular music videos as models for *focusing on sociopolitical issues* (such as war and oppression) in order to *disrupt commonplace* understandings of civic engagement. In particular, his use of Marvin

Gaye's music video, *What's Goin' On*, as an example of how one might speak back to a country's war policies and a Youtube video, by Egyptian rapper Muhammed Munir, as an example of how one person participated in the Arab Spring uprising, shows how critical educators might foster student perspective-taking beyond specific texts toward specific dominant Discourse systems of meaning. Mr. Shaw also provided opportunities for students to analyze a number of TED Talks for their use of rhetorical devices, multimodal supports, and calls to action. For students like Echo, such opportunities modeled how one might *take action to promote social justice*. As noted by Lewison et al. (2002), this component of Critical Literacy is often difficult to foster. It involves positioning students as "actors rather than spectators in the world" (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 17) and, thus, runs contrary to traditional I-R-E models of classroom practice (Freire, 1973).

Such findings are particularly important for two reasons: For one, as noted in the theoretical framework to this dissertation study, Burnett and Merchant (2011) warn that the use of popular culture texts as targets of, rather than vehicles for, critique may result in the so-called colonization of the popular, which, in turn, might lead students to resist taking up a critical perspective. However, because Mr. Shaw's use of popular culture texts served as models for how one might enact a critical perspective, this study suggests one way teachers might demonstrate for students how one engages in praxis, or reflection and action on the word and world (Freire, 1973). Secondly, Burnett and Merchant (2011) also warn that openly advocating for critical perspectives toward various ideologies, whether text-based or not, might result in the institutionalization of specific worldviews. The authors argue that assuming a student audience that passively accepts whatever

critical perspective their teacher might suggest may limit opportunities for students to enact a critical stance toward a broad range of social issues. In short, such practices may constrain student agency.

In the case of Mr. Shaw, because the texts he used often focused on social justice issues related to race and gender, they presented *multiple* (and often contradictory) *viewpoints* that modeled, again, the ways one might take up specific critical perspectives. As such, rather than institutionalizing a specific stance toward race or gender, Mr. Shaw provided a space where students might construct their own stance and, thus, exercise agency. In the end, student work such as Echo's TED Talk project, Angilé's Media Analysis project, and Shane's letter critiquing his senate representative's stance on immigration all stand as examples of how the use of multimodal model texts and text sets might foster authentic, rather than institutionalized, Critical Literacy practices. In sum, these findings fill one particular gap in existing research; whereas previous studies do not fully explore what teachers do to foster specific Critical Literacy practices, data analysis explores how one teacher used multimodal model texts to foster student critical text production. Such a finding is important because fostering this kind of literacy practice opens spaces for students to exercise agency.

Data Collected Across an Entire Semester Clarifies Certain Limitations Associated with Critical Literacy Conversations

A second way this study contributes to previous research is by focusing on the ways students engaged in Critical Literacy practices over an entire semester. As noted above, in nearly every classroom session, Mr. Shaw attempted to foster student critical

conversations that aligned with each of the four Critical Literacy components. Thus, immersing myself in the setting over an extended period of time provided rich data that explored the affordances and constraints associated with such alignments. Data collected over the course of the semester indicated that, on the one hand, student engagement in critical conversations was often limited with respect to *taking action and promoting social justice*. However, providing opportunities to engage in multiple critical conversations, at times, minimized that limitation. Furthermore, with respect to that same Critical Literacy component, data analysis indicated that student participation in critical text production aligned more fully with that fourth component.

In discussing the findings I noted that, while engaged in classroom conversations, students' critical perspective-taking rarely went beyond reflection on the actions of others. Data analysis suggested that alignment with such components may be constrained by the nature of this particular Critical Literacy practice. In other words, while such conversations may involve students *disrupting the commonplace* or *interrogating multiple perspectives*, because the conversations were reflective or contemplative in nature (e.g., nearly all focused on what others have done, and what students might do, to act on social justice issues), students in general did not fully engage in *taking action to promote social justice*. Such findings are consistent with Lewison et al.'s (2002) research. In their study, they noted that the Critical Literacy practices most often fostered by beginner and novice critical educators focused on *disruption of the commonplace* and *analysis of multiple perspectives*. The findings of this study suggest the same may be true for experienced critical educators. Ultimately, such findings raise questions about

what constitutes taking action. In other words, one might argue that simply engaging in conversations that *disrupt the commonplace* or *interrogate multiple points of view* is, in itself, a form of *taking action*. Framing critical conversations in this way, however, does not minimize certain limitations associated with promoting social justice. In other words, engaging in such conversations solely within the context of the classroom limits the potential reach, for example, of a student's call to action. In sum, then, the ways this study contributed to existing research is by demonstrating how a teacher might foster critical perspective-taking through, rather than toward, (often multimodal) texts and text sets. It also demonstrates that the nature of certain Critical Literacy practices may constrain alignment with Critical Literacy components.

Contributions to Theory

In their 2012 article, *Seeing and Hearing Students' Lived and Embodied Critical Literacy Practices*, Johnson and Vasudevan noted that Critical Literacy approaches to literacy learning may, at times, privilege traditional modes of communication over others. They argued that, as a result, educators must “expand current definitions of Critical Literacy” (p. 35) to include embodied texts, such as the things we wear and the gestures we perform. This is important for two reasons. For one, expanding what counts as text may increase the “curricular relevance for students” (p. 39). Secondly, it may hold the potential for exploring spaces where students might “initiate critical projects” (p. 40) through modes of communication that may otherwise go undervalued in the classroom.

In this dissertation study I argue similarly, that as teachers open such spaces for critical perspective-taking, research needs to follow suit by expanding current definitions

of Critical Literacy. One way to do this is by drawing on a New Literacies and Critical Pedagogy perspective. Thus, this dissertation research study contributes to theory in demonstrating that drawing on an interdisciplinary framework: 1) enriches an understanding of what it means for teachers to employ in their day-to-day classroom practices a broad interpretation of literacy; and 2) serves to highlight specific affordances and constraints associated with a teacher's personal Critical Pedagogy.

Drawing on a New Literacies Perspective Contextualizes Critical Literacy Practices

Because a New Literacies approach broadens what we do with reading and writing to include both relational and technical modes of communication, it broadens a Critical Literacy approach to include any text toward and through which students might direct a critical perspective. As noted above, this is important because the kinds of texts (both digital and otherwise) through which students communicate are expanding as rapidly as ever. Thus, on the one hand, while such modes of communication present “opportunit[ies] . . . for letting everyone be producers as well as consumers,” (Gee & Hayes, 2011, p. 3), on the other, they also, at times, position their audiences in marginalizing ways (Janks, 2012).

As such, one way this study contributes to theory is by drawing on a New Literacies perspective that contextualizes critical perspective-taking to include a wide array of modes and media. As data analysis indicated, Mr. Shaw understood literacy to include anything that can be interpreted. Throughout the study, he noted such a pedagogy resulted in teaching practices that are both critical and “organic” in nature. In other words, while he hoped his teaching practices might foster critical perspective-taking

toward and through traditional texts, he also hoped his classroom might function as a site where “everything . . . even if it’s *World of Warcraft* . . . can be taken for an intellectual endeavor.” As such, the classroom functioned as a place where students engaged broadly in critical conversations and critical text production; in their day-to-day Critical Literacy interactions, Mr. Shaw (and the students) drew on both traditional and new media/popular culture texts in order to *disrupt the commonplace, analyze multiple worldviews, focus on sociopolitical issues, and take action to promote social justice*. Examples included student-generated interpretations aimed *toward* texts such clothing tags and Barbie Dolls, and *through* texts, such as TED Talks, documentary videos, and, in the case of Alex, “dry sarcasm.”

One particularly salient example centers on Maria’s social action project. As noted in the findings, Maria’s project involved not only counting her clothes, but also recording where each item was made. Thus, it included reading the informational tags on each piece of clothing. In this case, where data analysis contributes to theory is that framing her clothing (and their tags) as a kind of text that she “read” broadens a Critical Literacy perspective. In particular, it demonstrates how students and teachers might begin to interpret everyday social practices (such as those related to clothing purchases) as a literacy practice that includes as texts whatever might carry the ideological messages of their creators. In Maria’s case in particular, data analysis involved exploring the degree to which she “read” her clothing and clothing tags in such a way as to *analyze multiple perspectives*, including her own. A second example discussed in the findings suggests that, in creating and presenting her Media Analysis project, Anglé critiqued a

system of meaning put forth by television shows and digital images. She did this by broadly drawing on multiple modes of communication to construct a new media counternarrative. Such an example demonstrates how an interdisciplinary perspective aids in exploring the ways students might “initiate” multimodal “critical projects” (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012, p. 40). While previous studies most often focused on the ways Critical Literacy practices consider advertisements and/or digital images as texts toward which students may direct critical perspective-taking, few employ an interdisciplinary framework that includes a New Literacies perspective (Hartnell-Young & Vetere, 2008; Howard-Bender & Mulcahy, 2007; Woodcock, 2010). By framing the digital images included in her project as part of her textual construction, a New Literacies perspective emphasized how multimodalities might contribute to a student’s critical perspective-taking. This is an important point, because as the New London Group (1996) argued, for students like Anglé, interpreting the world through multimodal representations is one way they might exercise agency in order to gain “access to the evolving language of work, power, and community” (p. 252).

Taken together, these examples are important for two reasons. For one, they suggest that within these kinds of contexts a New Literacies perspective helps educators understand how students draw on myriad resources to enact a critical perspective. Anglé drew on popular music, digital images, and her (and her family’s) personal experiences living as immigrants in the United States to construct a new media (counternarrative) text through which she *disrupted the commonplace*. Similarly, Maria drew on her personal experiences and New Literacies texts to construct a traditional text through which she

analyzed multiple viewpoints related to the economic disparities between so-called developed and developing countries. Secondly, while New Literacies might contribute to a Critical Literacy perspective, such an interdisciplinary framework may also contribute to understanding how student critical perspective-taking might be limited. While Angíle did interrogate dominant Discourse worldviews that position her and her family in stereotypical ways, she fell short of analyzing how stereotyping may get used (even in the New Literacies texts she analyzed) when speaking back to such dominant Discourses. Likewise, while Maria began to “read” New Literacies texts in a critical way, taking an interdisciplinary perspective highlighted moments when her critical perspective-taking was limited. As noted, while Maria did begin to *take action and promote social justice* by reflecting on her clothes counting, she did not consider ways she might act in order to reduce such economic disparities. Thus, while the clothes counting project and counternarrative documentary appeared to enhance the “curricular relevance for [Maria and Angíle]” (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012, p. 39), it also highlighted the challenges associated with student engagement in specific Critical Literacy components.

In sum, then, drawing on a New Literacies perspective enriched data analysis associated with Critical Literacy practices. It did this by contextualizing Maria’s and Angíle’s interactions with and through texts that might otherwise not be considered for critical consumption and production (Kress, 2010). Such a discussion, then, helps further articulate the ways students like Angíle or Maria might respond to Mr. Shaw’s attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices. Thus, while a New Literacies perspective contributed to understanding how these two students draw on specific resources to create

and present a critical text, this perspective also helped enrich discussions of how students' critical perspective-taking might be limited in the ways it aligns with certain Critical Literacy components.

Highlighting Teacher's Affordances and Constraints Informs How Critical Educators Shape Their Teaching Practices

A second way this dissertation study contributes to theory is by highlighting the affordances and constraints related to Mr. Shaw's literacy learning perspective. While reporting on what teachers might do to foster student critical perspective-taking, few studies have focused on student Critical Literacy practices associated with the ways a teacher puts a personal Critical Pedagogy theory into practice (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Tate, 2011). This is especially true when considering the affordances and constraints s/he might associate with such a theory. As noted in the findings, I described Mr. Shaw's pedagogy as drawing primarily on the works of Paulo Freire (1973). I also noted instances when positioning students as co-learners appeared to foster their Critical Literacy practices. Because Mr. Shaw indicated such strategies derived from his personal Critical Pedagogy, data analysis reflected, in part, his beliefs about the degree to which that pedagogy afforded or constrained such attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices. This is important, because analyzing the affordances and constraints associated with a teacher's literacy learning perspective might inform the ways university critical educators shape their teaching practices in order to foster their students' transition from pre-service to in-service educators (Morrell, 2011).

Oftentimes Mr. Shaw drew on a Critical Pedagogy perspective to position the students both physically and relationally as discussion directors and primary audience. As indicated by Mr. Shaw's comments, these moves were deliberate on his part. In other words, although his style of teaching was "organic" in relation to what direction the critical conversation might take, his intentions were for discussion and text production to be critical and student-centered. In elaborating this point, he said:

I'm like, 'I'm writing this [free-write prompt] on the board . . . because it ties to something we're going to read today or it ties to something we've been talking about.' But they've shifted some of my ideas on these things because they have great minds and I want them to be able to share that stuff.

This quote captures how Mr. Shaw put his personal Critical Pedagogy into practice. In it, he suggests that he positions students as co-learners. Commenting that the students have "great minds" and that they might "shift some of [his] ideas" suggests that Mr. Shaw opens spaces for students to act as discussion directors. The important point to note here is that, ultimately, such comments suggest Mr. Shaw believed his personal Critical Pedagogy, in one sense, afforded his attempts at fostering student critical perspective-taking.

However, it is also important to note that participant interview data suggest that students believed this too. In other words, when discussing Mr. Shaw's teaching style interviewees indicated that the dialogic nature of the classroom afforded Mr. Shaw's attempts at fostering their critical perspective-taking. For example, in our second interview, Alex noted that, "Mr. Shaw's class is probably the most influential class I've probably taken in the school." Alex further explained that he believed he was "getting

better at arguing,” and that “while [the class] hasn’t directly affected me yet, it’s probably going to affect me a lot when I’m older.” Such personal interpretations of Mr. Shaw’s teaching style are important to note. For one, they indicate that, while Mr. Shaw perceived his personal Critical Pedagogy, in one sense, as an affordance, for students like Alex, that style also fostered his critical participation. This point is made more salient when recalling the discussion of Alex’s case. The fact that Mr. Shaw allowed Alex to voice a dissenting (and often sexist) opinion, regardless of its intended effect, reflected a personal Critical Pedagogy that afforded his attempts at fostering one particular student’s participation, even if that participation might be unique, or problematic.

However, it is important to note that doing so may also constrain, or even silence, other student voices. This point further highlights the complexities of enacting a personal Critical Pedagogy. During our third interview, Mr. Shaw explained, he “want[ed] students] to sort of flesh out how they feel, and share, and sometimes conflict, and come to resolutions and those types of things through the conversation.” Fostering conversations in which students have the opportunity to “sometimes conflict and come to resolutions,” according to Mr. Shaw, provides opportunities for students to become “critical beings and to think about social issues critically.” As noted above, Behrman (2006) suggests there is a need for research in Critical Literacy that features classrooms in which the hierarchical nature of instruction is flattened. As Alex and Mr. Shaw indicated, one characteristic of their classroom was that interactions were often student-directed.

This point is made more salient when considering how Mr. Shaw positioned himself as a co-learner with the students. For example, in assigning the American Dreamers project he said to the junior class, “I’m not an expert at this. I teach English and I do literary stuff. So I’m no expert in creating radio programs and radio segments.” These comments suggest one way an interdisciplinary framework might contribute to theory. Because Mr. Shaw positioned himself as someone who is “not an expert at this,” he signaled to the students that, through this project, they (rather than he) might be the ones who share knowledge and understanding. Data analysis related to such comments, thus, helped articulate how Mr. Shaw put his personal Critical Pedagogy theory into practice as well as how he interpreted that pedagogy as an affordance for his attempts at fostering student critical text production.

Although Mr. Shaw interpreted his personal Critical Pedagogy at times as an affordance, he also noted that, at other times, it served as a constraint. Such instances most often occurred when his pedagogy appeared to counter traditional notions of assessment. In our third interview, he explained that, although his grading philosophy (of giving no quizzes or tests and assigning no grade less than a 70) is part of his personal critical stance, it sometimes has un-hoped-for consequences:

I think that the kids taste the grades and as long as the grade is close to the B range then they do, then they are okay, and I think that it hinders real like organic learning because they’re chasing the number they’re not chasing the knowledge. And I mean I’m trying to kind of pepper throughout the semester this kind of critique of education, educational system. But I often become, you know, a cog in the wheel too . . . I want my kids to be, to want to learn, because it’s fun and it’s interesting and not because it’s their reward.

This tension between critiquing the educational system and becoming a “cog in the wheel” suggests that Mr. Shaw must negotiate between a personal Critical Pedagogy and a systemic (traditional/banking) pedagogy. For Mr. Shaw, who views the traditional notion of student assessment as “arbitrary,” that negotiation, as he explained, must take into consideration the degree to which “the grade” serves as a motivation for his students to complete their assignments as well as the degree to which his pedagogic stance resists that system of “arbitrary” assessment.

This tension between traditional and critical notions of classroom assessment is perhaps made more complicated by his students’ attitudes toward such pedagogic decisions. For example, as noted in the findings section, Alex explained that he doesn’t do any of the assigned work in Mr. Shaw’s class, because, “if you’re missing a grade, he gives you a 70.” He explained that he likes that policy simply because he doesn’t do homework. The fact that many of the students did not complete assigned work, for Mr. Shaw, reflected a tension between his personal Critical Pedagogy and a systemic atmosphere that values so-called objective forms of assessment. Relying on alternative methods of assessment such as critical text production and participation in critical conversations, thus, for Mr. Shaw, at times, became problematic.

In sum, then, although his personal Critical Pedagogy, at times appeared to afford his attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices, because its associated methods of assessment were, in his view, not “punitive,” at other times, it constrained such attempts. This distinction, thus, highlights the importance of drawing on an interdisciplinary framework for research on Critical Literacy practices. Specifically, it

enriches an understanding not just of a teacher's personal theory of literacy learning, but also how s/he might attribute to that theory certain affordances and constraints associated with her or his attempts at fostering student Critical Literacy practices. In turn, this may inform what educators do to prepare pre-service teachers for their careers. In other words, drawing on an interdisciplinary framework to make sense out of experienced critical educators' interpretations of their own pedagogic theories may aid in designing curriculum to meet the needs of both future teachers and the students with whom they interact.

While drawing on an interdisciplinary framework contributes to theory associated with research on student Critical Literacy practices, considering how Mr. Shaw interpreted his Critical Pedagogy as affording and/or constraining his teaching practices suggests a direction toward which an interdisciplinary framework might be extended. In particular, it suggests a need for a practice-based model (Burnett & Merchant, 2011) that takes into consideration both student and teacher Critical Literacy practices. While this study begins to move in that direction, findings suggest a need for a comprehensive model that takes into consideration both an interdisciplinary theoretical framework and teacher/student interpretations of how specific components of the model might afford and/or constrain Critical Literacy learning. While highlighting participant voices, such a model might within individual studies also function in an interactive fashion to inform both theory and practice.

Limitations of Practice and Theory

Although this study contributes to the field of research on Critical Literacy practices, it is limited in terms of context and participant. In particular, it does not explore the ways Mr. Shaw enacted his critical perspective outside the context of the classroom. In terms of participant(s), it focuses on a single experienced critical educator as well as a small group of students whose literacy learning experience was guided by one teacher and his personal Critical Pedagogy. Exploring the degree to which critical educators at multiple levels of experience enact their critical stance both inside and outside the classroom may further inform what we know about the affordances and constraints they attribute to fostering student Critical Literacy practices (Lewison et al., 2002; Morrell, 2003; Vasquez et al., 2013). In introducing the findings section of this study, I described one experienced critical educator's pedagogy and how it originated. Specifically, I explored the ways he framed it as being a social justice/critical perspective; and as being, in his words, "organic." In our interviews and informal conversations, Mr. Shaw explained how his teaching practices drew on Paulo Freire's notion of Critical Pedagogy as well as a philosophy of literacy learning that aligned with a New Literacies perspective. However, I did not explore what this might mean in his day-to-day interactions outside of the classroom and how those interactions might resonate with his classroom practice.

What Mr. Shaw Does outside of the Classroom

Thus, one area where this study is limited is that it does not explore Mr. Shaw's critical stance as it is currently enacted in his day-to-day interactions outside the

classroom. Such social practices are important to explore because they, along with personal histories, inevitably influence how and why a teacher enacts her/his teaching philosophies. Since practice and theory do not exist without the other, enacting a personal Critical Pedagogy in all contexts is important for a critical educator. Vasquez et al. (2013) quote hooks (1994, as cited in Vasquez et al., 2013) in noting that, ultimately, such “self-actualized” teachers are better equipped to open spaces where students might empower themselves by “moving beyond compartmentalized bits of knowledge and narrowed perspectives” (p. 30).

This is not to say that Mr. Shaw did not enact his critical perspective outside the classroom. In fact, he did share with me the ways he engaged in a critical perspective-taking in his daily life. For example, in our second formal interview and during informal conversations, he described the volunteer work he does at a community garden that provides fresh vegetables for a local food bank. He explained he does this because he “want[s] to see more people get the food that we produce, that need it.” Although broadening data analysis toward including this aspect of Mr. Shaw’s personal Critical Pedagogy is beyond the scope of this study, exploring not just a critical educators’ personal histories, but also their interests and activities that go on outside the context of the classroom, would further enrich how theory and practice work in tandem within a Critical Literacy classroom. Such pedagogical decisions, in Mr. Shaw’s view, set him apart from his colleagues. On more than one occasion he conveyed to me that he often felt like an “island.” In other words, he felt as though his teaching practices were inconsistent with those who taught around him. As such, broadening the number and

kinds of participants may further inform what teachers and researchers know about the affordances and constraints associated with teaching from a critical perspective.

Focusing on a Single Teacher Participant

Certain researchers argue against citing the case study as a methodological limitation. In doing so, they note that case studies are not intended as “grand generalizations” (Stake, 1995, p. 7). Rather, they may serve the purpose of exploring a unique case. In other words, its purpose may be intrinsic (Stake, 1995). I argue similarly in the methods section of this study, that, due to the unique nature of his personal teaching philosophy, Mr. Shaw represents an intrinsic case. For example, he did not assign failing grades, he used popular culture texts, and he asked students to engage in projects that disrupted societal norms.

However, because the study focused on a single teacher participant it focused on a single teacher’s theory of learning. Thus, while the study explores what Mr. Shaw does to foster student Critical Literacy practices across two classrooms, the focus of that exploration on a single experienced critical educator is specific to his and the students’ experiences. When considering how researchers might learn more about the resonance between theory and practice, it is, thus, clear that exploring one experienced critical educator’s personal Critical Pedagogy limits what can be learned about how other (newcomer or novice) critical educators enact their personal Critical Pedagogies in ways that may or may not foster student Critical Literacy practices.

Focusing on a Small Group of Students

The same may be said about the students as well. In other words, because the study focused on a small group of students (22 total) taught by a Mr. Shaw, it explored how literacy learning was guided by this one teacher's personal Critical Pedagogy. While this study did highlight multiple student voices and the personal experiences they bring to their classrooms it is limited in its focus on students in two classes who were taught by one (and the same) critical educator. Furthermore, while the study focused on how the students engaged in certain Critical Literacy practices as a group and as intrinsic case studies, it did not include case studies of students who did not engage in Critical Literacy practices. Such studies would be worth pursuing in that they may further highlight how and, perhaps why, students like Fear do not engage in Critical Literacy practices yet still *think* critically. Such studies might aid educators as they search for alternate ways to support students who wish to have their voices heard but may not always wish to participate in the kinds of Critical Literacy practices occurring in their classrooms.

Implications for Future Research

Exploring the limitations associated with the resonance between theory and practice is important, in one sense, because it suggests certain implications for future research. Such limitations suggest that future research may add to what we know about Critical Literacy practices by: (a) including collective (Stake, 1995) and longitudinal case studies; (b) including more ethnographic work across classroom contexts; and (c) by

using discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Kress, 2010) to broadly examine the various modes of communication associated with critical conversations.

Case Studies That are Longitudinal in Nature

This study suggests future research is needed that includes longitudinal case studies. Such studies might feature both teachers and students as they navigate the educational landscape over extended periods of time and contexts.

Studies that follow teachers as they transition from pre-service to career status and as they (perhaps) also transition from beginner, to novice, to experienced critical educators may enrich what we know about the challenges of putting a Critical Literacy pedagogy into practice. Such studies may further extend findings to include the affordances and constraints associated with fostering student Critical Literacy practices at each stage of critical educator development. Doing so may further inform the instructional practices of university educators as they seek to better prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population. As Morrell (2011) notes, there is a growing need for “teacher(s) who possess different knowledge from what is generally available in undergraduate education majors of English Methods courses” (p. 160). To that end, Morrell argues, “progressive English educators must fundamentally reconsider the structure and function of the methods course” (p 160).

Morrell also argues that English educators must consider the ways youth learn from (and through) various popular culture texts. Like all texts, those that derive from popular culture may, on the one hand, function to position some youth in marginalizing ways and, on the other, function as sites for challenging the systems of meaning that

underlie such positionings. This suggests the importance of exploring longitudinally and across contexts the ways students engage in Critical Literacy practices. While this study does add to current research in that it explores the ways students engage in Critical Literacy practices over the course of an entire semester, it does not extend that exploration into broader contexts that include what students do in other classrooms as well as what they do outside of the classroom.

It should be noted that during interviews, certain students did report on their day-to-day Critical Literacy practices outside of school. For example, as noted in the findings section, Echo described his participation in a protest rally the year before the study took place. Alex also reported on how he used “dry sarcasm” to disrupt what he perceived as his friends’ racist comments. However, what they did not report on was the degree to which their critical perspective-taking outside of the classroom resonated with their Critical Literacy learning inside the classroom. Thus, similar to Mr. Shaw’s case, such data did not fully explore student critical perspective-taking across contexts. Questions such as how, and to what degree, students engage in such critical perspective-taking beyond Mr. Shaw’s classroom were not explored. Future research in this area may add to this current study in that they may explore the extent to which critical perspective-taking persists beyond this study’s context.

Ethnographic Work across Classroom Contexts

As a researcher, because I was immersed in both of Mr. Shaw’s classrooms two to three times a week over the course of the whole semester, in one sense, this study demonstrates how drawing on ethnographic methods (Geertz, 1973; Tracy, 2010) might

provide a more detailed and nuanced understanding of what a teacher does to foster student Critical Literacy practices. For one, because Mr. Shaw's teaching practices, at times, fostered student agency, they also did not guarantee specific kinds of (critical) perspective-taking. Data analysis associated with Alex's day-to-day interactions within the classroom stands as a case in point. As noted in the findings section, Alex's (critical) responses to print advertisements were unique and, at times, appeared to perpetuate rather than challenge sexist messages presented by various media. As such, the degree to which Mr. Shaw fostered his critical perspective may not have been fully realized. Because data analysis focused on Alex's critical perspective-taking solely in Mr. Shaw's classroom, comments he made to me about his use of dry sarcasm within other classes (or even outside of school altogether) could not be confirmed. Thus, data analysis did not fully explore how others interpreted his comments. Such findings suggest that future research in the area of student Critical Literacy practices might explore such ambiguities by incorporating ethnographic methods that occur in broader contexts. Ethnographic case studies that explore student Critical Literacy practices across contexts both within and outside of the school setting hold the potential for further understanding the nature of specific students' critical perspective-taking.

Employing Discourse Analysis to Broadly Examine Multiple Modes of Communication

Finally, a third way this study suggests a need for future research is in its examination of the moment-to-moment interactions between participants (Gee, 2005; Kress, 2010). As demonstrated in the analysis of numerous critical conversations and

critical text production, broadly exploring moment-to-moment discursive interactions as they relate to context is compatible with research that examines student Critical Literacy practices. For example, in the case of Angílé, I explored how she used multimodal texts to create and present a critical text that functioned as a counternarrative. In particular, I described the ways her selection of various digital images contributed to her interrogation of dominant Discourse understandings of what it means to be a second generation African immigrant. I also explored how Echo, in his TED Talk, drew on a movie poster to push back against dominant Discourse worldviews that position Palestinians as terrorists. In describing his presentation, I began to demonstrate how gestures might contribute to discursive positionings. Finally, in exploring Maria's clothes counting project, I argued that a broad conception of literacy that includes such texts as clothing tags might contribute to understanding how an interdisciplinary framework informs research on student Critical Literacy practices. Given these examples, it is clear future research that specifically draws on discourse analytic techniques (Gee, 2005; Kress, 2010) may further enrich how student literacy practices convey a critical perspective as well how others might perceive them as such. In particular, Kress (2010) argues that a multimodal discourse analytic approach may enrich what we know about how students engage in literacy learning.

Implications for Practice

While this dissertation study suggests that experienced critical educators may be faced with certain challenges, it also adds to these findings in that it suggests these

challenges may be associated with the specific types of literacy practices a teacher may foster. This is important in that it points toward certain implications for literacy learning.

Critical Literacy Instruction is Far More Than Simply *Learning* the Content

One implication this study suggests for classroom practice is that, in order to fully engage students in all Critical Literacy components, critical educators may need to foster a variety of literacy practices over an extended period of time. In doing so, the affordances of one practice may compensate for the constraints of another. In the case of Mr. Shaw, fostering critical text production afforded opportunities for certain students to act on their critical perspective-taking in ways that critical conversations solely did not do. This was particularly true for students like Catarina, who rarely participated in critical conversations. In particular, whereas she rarely voiced a critical perspective during classroom conversations, in her project critiquing a Disney television commercial, she *disrupted commonplace* assumptions about American families. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation study, providing a space for students to exercise agency is becoming increasingly important. As Janks (2012) suggests, this is particularly true when considering the pervasiveness of new media texts, such as television advertisements, in our day-to-day interactions; through such texts, dominant Discourses have the power to position certain students in marginalizing ways. As such, through a critical text, Catarina's critical text spoke back to such positionings. This suggests that by compensating for the constraints associated with the critical conversation, critical text production might afford specific literacy practices that open up spaces for students to fully engage in each of the four Critical Literacy components. However, the converse

may also be true as well. Alex's participation in the critical conversations serves as a case in point.

Likewise, this study suggests that classroom practice should include engagement in Critical Literacy practices (such as the critical conversation) over an extended period of time. Doing so, may afford greater alignment with multiple Critical Literacy components. In reflecting on the examples discussed in the findings section, it is clear, for example, that Echo's participation in multiple conversations over the course of the entire semester opened spaces for him to engage with multiple Critical Literacy components. For example, in one conversation, like Langston Hughes, he *disrupted the commonplace* assumptions about the concept of freedom. In another conversation focused on societal pressures to enact specific gender norms, he, along with Petch, analyzed the relationship between little p and Big P politics. Finally, while presenting his TED Talk, he called on his audience to *take action to promote social justice*.

However, for critical educators (and the students they teach), such extended critical perspective-taking may, at times, involve enacting a stance within a system that pushes against that stance. One specific example discussed in the findings section speaks to such a situation. In the sophomore conversation on January 22nd, several students enacted a critical stance toward their understanding of the American educational system. As they discussed a model TED Talk by Ken Robinson, the students criticized what they perceived as an undervaluing of the Arts. In the end, Young Esquire III went as far as to argue that the school system "brainwashes" teachers into believing that "Math and Science," rather than English and Dance, "is up there." Given their critical stance toward

the educational system in which he works, one implication for classroom practices is that critical educators must be adept at navigating such critical conversations. Ultimately, for Mr. Shaw, and other critical educators like him, positioning oneself, along with the students as co-learners, is complicated and, perhaps, at times, problematic.

Critical Literacy Instruction is Far More Than Simply *Teaching the Content*

However, implications for classroom practice related to enacting a critical stance are not limited to student perspectives. This is demonstrated in the instances when Mr. Shaw reported to me that he often felt his personal Critical Pedagogy was at odds with certain systemic social practices associated with public education. As I noted in discussing the origins and enactment of his Critical Pedagogy, Mr. Shaw aligned his teaching practices with Freire's (1973) call to disrupt the traditional banking system of education. As interpreted by Mr. Shaw, constructing such a pedagogy caused him to question "giving [students] information to regurgitate back to us on tests." Given the current high-stakes testing atmosphere in his state, such a critical stance stands in stark contrast with the value his school system places on standardized testing. Thus, one implication for instruction is that experienced critical educators must reflect on the degree to which they may have to negotiate their own stances toward certain systems of meaning that may constrain those stances.

As such, suggestions for future classroom practice indicate that, like their beginner and novice colleagues (Lewison et al., 2002) experienced critical educators need support in implementing their personal pedagogies. What this means for classroom practice is that those who share similar critical views should not work in isolation. For

example, as Lopez (2011) suggests, by creating what she calls "groups of 'critical friends,' teachers can assist one another through listening, questioning, and collaboration" (p. 79). The findings in this dissertation study support this notion. Furthermore, in extending Morrell's call (2011) to better prepare our pre-service teachers to enact personal Critical Pedagogies, there is a need for professional development opportunities through which in-service teachers might explore new ways to foster student Critical Literacy practices. This is especially important in considering the ever-expanding (and changing) contexts in which critical perspective-taking may occur. As Avila and Pandya (2013) note, such contexts might foster what the authors describe as critical digital literacies, "or those skills and practices that lead to the creation of digital texts that interrogate the world" while also "allow[ing] and foster[ing] the interrogation of digital multimedia texts" (p. 3).

Conclusion

Seven months after I completed my final observations in Mr. Shaw's classroom, I met with him in a coffee shop to discuss his plans for the upcoming summer break. During our conversation he reflected on the goals he set for that spring semester. He explained he had hoped, that after that final day of instruction, the students would take with them a growing and developing critical perspective. Such a goal is important for a critical educator; just as opportunities for communication in both local and global contexts continue to grow, so do opportunities to enact such critical perspectives (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Janks, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2009). As Lewis (2014) notes, "while new directions in critical literacy may embrace multimodality, embodiment, and

spatiality in digital and global times of diversity and standardization, the underlying aims remain” (p. 192).

Given that such aims might include *disrupting the commonplace, analyzing multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice* (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013) this dissertation study fills a specific gap in research on Critical Literacy. It does this by exploring not just *what* students do when engaged in Critical Literacy practices, but exactly *how* they go about doing it. As such, it highlighted student voices and, thus, the ways they exercised agency. In particular, it demonstrated that while some students made their voices heard through the critical conversation, other students did so through the critical texts they created. Yet others did so by engaging in both kinds of Critical Literacy practices. Understanding such everyday literacy practices is important in a world where communicative spaces are burgeoning. In particular, they aid us in supporting our students as they “identify and work within [contextual] understandings of the relations between language and power” (Hagood, 2013). Having been a (critical) classroom educator for 16 years prior to conducting this study, I experienced firsthand the need for supporting my own students as they (we) negotiated the multiple and, often, contradictory perspectives we encountered in our day-to-day experiences. In thinking back on those years, it is clear to me that what I have learned through this study would have aided us as we explored ways to variously take up and/or resisted the positions offered by those multiple perspectives. It is also clear that as beginner, novice, and experienced critical

educators continue on this path, the multimodal possibilities of text and context hold promise for critical exploration.

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APPENDIX A

COMPONENTS OF CRITICAL LITERACY

Disrupting the commonplace	Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	Focusing on sociopolitical issues	Taking action and promoting social justice
Poses problems associated with all subjects of study; understands knowledge is historically constructed.	Analyzes multiple and contradictory perspectives.	Looks at the relationship between the local and the societal, especially in terms of sociopolitical systems.	Engages in praxis – reflection and action on the world.
Asks how texts position the reader as well as others.	Asks of texts and their creators: whose voices are privileged and whose are not?	Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations	Language to exercise power and question injustice.
Popular culture and media are included as part of the curriculum	Focuses on those whose voices are marginalized.	Literacy is used as means to engage in the politics of daily life.	Examine how language maintains domination.
Emphasizes critique as well as hope (deconstruct and reconstruct)	Constructs counternarratives to dominant discourses.	Literacy is seen as a tool for civic participation.	Engage in crossing cultural borders in order to understand others.
	Attends to and makes difference visible.		

Adapted from Lewison et al. (2002) and Vasquez et al. (2013)

APPENDIX B

CTCC EARLY/MIDDLE SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

CTCC Early/ Middle College		Enrollment			
		Enrollment by Race		Enrollment by Gender	
Grade Span	9-12	American Indian/Alaskan	1	Female	Male
Total Students	154	Asian/Pacific Islander	3	74	80
Student/Teacher ratio	11.85	Black	56		
Free lunch Eligibility	49	Hispanic	13		
Reduced lunch Eligibility	8	White	73		
Title I Status	Yes	Two or more races	8		

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Sophomores			
Self-Selected Pseudonym	Reason for choosing this pseudonym.	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
Malik Shaw (teacher)	“Malcolm X used it as an example of a real name for an African American male.”	African American	Male
Lord Alex Pendleton	“Pendleton is my dog’s name.”	White	Male
Young Esquire the III	“My classy alter ego.”	Multi-racial	Male
Petch	“Cause it sounds weird.”	White	Male
Caelyn	“Because it’s pretty and starts with C and it’s White girl.”	African (Ghana)	Female
Maybell	“Because one of my classmates thought of it and I liked it.”	White	Female
Aylin	“Because it’s pretty :)”	Mexican American	Female
Lola	“It just popped into my head!”	African American	Female
Jax	“Idk, it’ll be easy to remember and it is kinda cool.”	White	Male
Echo	Idea from Mr. Shaw.	Palestinian	Male
Reagan	“I’ve always liked that name.”	White	Female
Maria	“Because I like it.”	Indian	Female

Juniors			
Your Name			
ChuChu	Classmate picked it for him.	White	Male
Nunu	Student did not designate a reason.	African American	Female
Marie	Researcher-selected. Student did not select a name.	White	Female
Lark	Student did not designate a reason.	White	Female
Catarina	Researcher-selected. Student did not select a name.	Mexican American	Female
Fear	It is his Xbox Live ID.	White	Male
Angilé	It is her French name.	African (Ivory Coast)	Female
Andrew	Researcher-selected. Student did not select a name.	White	Male
Shane	Provided on the first day of observation.	White	Transgender (identifies as male)
Alesha	Researcher-selected. Student did not select a name.	African American	Female
Mary	Researcher-selected. Student did not select a name.	African American	Female

APPENDIX D
OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Date	Sophomores (90 min each)	Juniors (90 min each)
1/15	X	X
1/22	X	X
1/24	X	X
1/29	X	X
1/30	X	X - Teacher Recorded
1/31	X	X
2/4	X	X - Teacher Recorded
2/5	X	X
2/8	X	X
2/9	X	X
2/11	X	X
2/19	X	X
2/25	X	X
2/26	X	X - Teacher Recorded
2/27	X	X
3/5	X	X
3/6	X	X - Teacher Recorded
3/7	X	X
3/12	X	X
3/14	X	X
3/18	X	X
3/19	X	X - Teacher Recorded
3/20	X	X
3/25	X	X - Teacher Recorded
3/26	X	X
3/28	X	X
3/30	X	X
4/9	X	X - Teacher Recorded
4/11	X	X
4/15	X	X
4/17	X	X
4/18	X	X - Teacher Recorded
4/23	X	X
4/25	X	X
4/30	X	X
5/1	X	X
5/2	X	X
5/6	X	X
5/16	X	X
5/20	X	X

Date	Sophomores (90 min each)	Juniors (90 min each)
5/22	X	X

APPENDIX E

DATA COLLECTION CROSSWALK

	Personal Interviews (Students)	Teacher Interviews	Student Work Samples	Personal Conv.	Video/ Audio Recording	Researcher field notes	Research audio-recorded reflections	Photographs taken by students
RQ 1: <i>In what ways does a teacher foster Critical Literacy practices in his high school tenth and eleventh grade English classes?</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	
RQ2: <i>In what ways do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices within the classroom?</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	

APPENDIX F
STUDENTS INTERVIEWED

Student Participant	Date	Length of Interview
Alex (sophomore)	3/5/13	37:41
	5/3/13	52:41
Echo (sophomore)	2/17/13	51:47
	4/28/13	43:48
Lola (sophomore)	3/16/13	24:56
	5/27/13	21:03
Shane (junior)	2/17/13	56:30
	4/28/13	56:50
Angíle (junior)	3/8/13	32:20
	5/10/13	34:31
	10 total	6 hours 52 minutes total

APPENDIX G

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS

Opening script: Hi [student's name], thank you for agreeing to this interview. One of my goals is to learn about the things you do with reading and writing both while you are in Mr. Shaw's class. So, that's what we'll be discussing today. Is it ok if I record the interview? Keep in mind that there are no wrong answers. I'm just looking to hear as much as you can tell me about what you do with reading and writing.

RQ2	1. In the interviews I conduct with students or teachers I usually like to learn a little about the person I am interviewing. So, for the first question, since I've only seen you in Mr. Shaw's class, could you tell me anything you would like for me to know about you that would help me understand who [student's name] is?
RQ1 RQ2	2. How about the things you like to do in your free time? Could you tell me about those things? [probe a little – i.e.: music, videogames, reading, internet surfing]. Do you like to do these things alone or with friends?
RQ1 RQ2	3. What kinds of things do you have on the walls of your bedroom (posters, calendars, artwork, etc.). Do you have any books in your room? How about a computer/iPod/iPod, etc.?
RQ2	4. How would you describe the kinds of things you like to read? How would you describe the kinds of things you like to write? Do you ever do this online? (How often? Where? Why do you read/write these kinds of things?)
RQ2	5. If you don't read or write, please describe why.
RQ2	6. Do you ever read or write with others (like collaborating)? If so, what kinds of things do you read or write together? This could include social media.
RQ1 RQ2	7. Some people use writing as a way to comment on things in our society or community. For example, they might write about certain kinds of discrimination. Do you ever read these kinds of writings? Do you ever write these kinds of things yourself? Online? Through social media such as Facebook or Twitter.
RQ1 RQ2	8. What do you like about being at the CTCC Early/middle College? How is it different from the other school(s) you have attended? What about the students?
RQ1; RQ2	9. What things do you like to do in school? How about in Mr. Shaw's class?
RQ1 RQ2	10. Describe the kinds of things related to reading and writing that you and your classmates do in your English class. Which of these things are most meaningful to you? Why?
RQ1 RQ2	11. In Mr. Shaw's class you all have been studying [for sophomores] things related to culture, such as civil disobedience, argumentation (TED talks), and so on. What would you say is the most important thing you have learned about these things in his class? Probe for specifics about the individual student's work in the class.
RQ2	12. If someone were to say to you that they view the world around them in a critical way, what do you think they would mean? In what way would that be similar or different from the way you see the world around you?

RQ2	13. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the kinds of things you do with reading and writing?
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APPENDIX H

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR MR. SHAW

Opening script: Hi Malik, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. As you know, I am interested in learning about the things you do in your class to foster student critical perspectives. One way to do this is through interviewing you about your teaching beliefs and practices. So, that's what we'll be discussing today. Is it ok if I record the interview? Keep in mind that there are no wrong answers. I'm just looking to hear as much as you can tell me about what you do to help students develop their critical perspectives.

First Interview

RQ1	1. So, first I'd like to learn a little about you since this is the first interview we've done. How long have you been teaching. What kinds of words would you use to describe yourself as an English teacher? Can you think of some experiences in your life that may have led to seeing yourself as this kind of teacher?
RQ1 RQ2	2. How would you describe a typical English class (in general)? In what ways is your English class similar to/different from this description?
RQ1 RQ2	3. Can you tell me a little bit about your teaching philosophy/vision? In what ways might your philosophy/vision be similar to/different from other English teachers'? How does it influence the kinds of things you and your students do in class?
RQ1 RQ2	4. What are the most important skills you want your students to learn? Why are these important?
RQ1 RQ2	5. What are the most important understandings about themselves and the world around them that you hope to foster in your students? Why are these the most important? You've been focusing a lot on culture in your Tenth grade class discussions so far. Can you talk a little about this focus? In your eleventh grade class you all have been discussing the American Dream. Can you tell me a little bit about this focus? Is this the typical focus for an eleventh grade English teacher?
RQ1 RQ2	6. What kinds of tasks/activities do you plan so that your students can achieve these skills and understandings? How often do you and your students do these things? Which of these things have been most successful/challenging so far? Which of these, if any, have you used so far this semester?
RQ1 RQ2	7. Do you believe your students do any of these kinds of things when they are not in your English class? If so, where do you think they may do this?
RQ1 RQ2	8. When you think of the phrase Critical Literacy, what things come to mind? In what ways does your classroom/your students/your teaching resemble this description? How does it differ?
RQ1 RQ2	9. What do you know about the kinds of reading and writing your students do outside of class? How did you come to know this?

RQ1 RQ2	10. How would you define non-traditional reading and writing? Do you ask your students to engage in non-traditional reading and writing? Why or why not?
RQ1 RQ2	11. Is there anything else you'd like for me to know about the reading and writing your students do both in and outside of class?
	12. Do you have any questions for me?

Second Interview

RQ1 RQ2	1. How are things going? Now that we've passed the midway point of the semester, I'd love to hear your reflections on the semester so far.
RQ1	2. During our conversations and in the first interview you discussed your goal of fostering your students' critical perspectives. Could you reflect on how you feel that goal is going? Are there any new goals? If so, could you describe them and why you might have added them?
RQ2	3. In what ways, if any, do you believe your students engage in critical perspective-taking in your English class? What about outside of class, at home, for example?
RQ1	4. Do you think your teaching has fostered any of these activities both within and outside the classroom? Why or why not?
RQ2	5. Have your students shared any out-of-school life experiences during which they demonstrated using these skills or understandings? Feel free to discuss any specific students that you want to discuss.
RQ1	6. Of the various lessons you have taught, which ones would you say are most related to developing a critical perspective? What about them made you feel this way?
RQ1	We've talked before about your desire to make your classroom one that is based on critical pedagogy. What does that mean to you? What successes and/or challenges have you faced in trying to do this?
RQ1	7. What is QFT? How might it relate to your interest in critical pedagogy? Are there any other strategies you have used that might have helped you take this perspective?
RQ1	8. Can you describe some of the similarities and differences you believe exist between your school and other schools in your district? How do these similarities relate to your goal of fostering your students' critical perspective-taking?
RQ1	9. In observing your classes, I have noticed that you often use technology in your instruction and in the tasks you assign to your students. Can you discuss how you do this and why?
RQ1	10. Is there anything else you'd like for me to know about the goals you have for your students or the kinds of literacy practices with which they engage both in and outside of class?

Third Interview

RQ1 RQ2	1. Looking back, how do you feel the semester went? With the sophomores? The juniors?
RQ1 RQ2	2. When I last interviewed you, you seemed to indicate that your teaching philosophy is that teachers should encourage students to be more critical. In what ways has it changed/stayed the same? In what ways was that successful? Not so successful?
RQ2	3. In what ways, if any, do you believe your students engaged in critical perspective-taking in your English class?
RQ1	4. What strategies/lessons/etc. do you think helped foster this critical perspective taking?
RQ1 RQ2	5. Could you describe a typical conversation that you and your students had in class this semester?
RQ2	6. In our second interview, we talked about students acting on their critical perspectives. I think you mentioned that you believe the students are not necessarily doing this now, but that they may do so later. In what ways do feel the same? Different?
RQ1	7. Of the various lessons you taught this year, which ones would you say are most related to developing a critical perspective? What about them made you feel this way?
RQ1	8. We've talked before about your desire to make your classroom one that is based on critical pedagogy. What does that mean to you? What successes and/or challenges have you faced in trying to do this?
RQ1	9. How does your trip to the servant garden connect (if it does) with teaching from a critical perspective?
RQ1 RQ2	10. What are your thoughts on students' use of electronic devices in the classroom? For example, do they help or hinder (or both) your attempts at teaching from a critical/social justice perspective?
RQ1 RQ2	11. If a new teacher wanted to use a Critical Literacy framework for her/his teaching, what advice would you give her/him?
RQ1 RQ2	12. Is there anything else you'd like for me to know about your classes this year?

APPENDIX I
STUDENT WORK SAMPLES

Student (sophomores)	Reflections on readings/films/ documentaries	Critical Texts	Written Free- Write responses	Other
Aylin	IIIIII	II		I
Caelyn	IIIIII	II	I	I
Jax	IIIIII	III		I
Maria	IIIII	III	I	III
Reagan	IIIIII	II	I	I
Alex	II	II		I
Lola	IIIIII	II	I	
Petch	III	II	I	II
Young Esquire III	III	II	I	I
Echo	III	II	I	I
Maybell	III	II	I	

Student (juniors)	Reflections on readings/films/ documentaries	Critical Texts	Written Free- Write responses	Other
Alesha	II	II		
Anglé	IIII	IIII		I
Chuchu	II	II	I	
Catarina	II	III		
Nunu	III	II		I
Young Esquire III	II	I		
Andrew	I	II		I
Shane		II	IIII	
Lark	III	III		I
Marie	III	II		I
Fear	I	I		
	I	I	I	

APPENDIX J

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL TEMPLATE AS INFLUENCED BY LEWISON ET AL. (2002) AND VASQUEZ ET AL. (2013)

Codes from Lewison et al., 2002 and Vasquez et al., 2013	Disrupting the commonplace (Systems of meaning?)	Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	Focusing on (Unpacking) sociopolitical issues	Taking action and promoting social justice
RQ 1: In what ways does the teacher foster Critical Literacy practices within the classroom?	<u>Emergent Codes</u>			
RQ 2: In what ways do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices within the classroom?	<u>Emergent Codes</u>			

APPENDIX K

**EXCERPTS FROM FIRST PHASE OF DATA ANALYSIS (JANUARY 29
OBSERVATION - SOPHOMORE CLASS) - CATEGORICAL CODES
INFLUENCED BY LEWISON ET AL. (2002) AND VASQUEZ ET AL. (2012)**

Codes from Lewison et al. (2002)	Disrupting the commonplace (systems of meaning?)	Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	Focusing on sociopolitical issues	Taking action and promoting social justice
	Poses problems associated with all subjects of study; understands knowledge is historically constructed.	Analyzes multiple and contradictory perspectives.	Looks at the relationship between the local and the societal, especially in terms of sociopolitical systems.	Engages in praxis – reflection and action on the world.
	Asks how texts position the reader as well as others.	Asks of texts and their creators: whose voices are privileged and whose are not?	Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations	Language to exercise power and question injustice.
	Popular culture and media are included as part of the curriculum	Focuses on those whose voices are marginalized.	Literacy is used as means to engage in the politics of daily life.	Examine how language maintains domination.
	Emphasizes critique as well as hope (deconstruct and reconstruct)	Constructs counternarratives to dominant discourses.	Literacy is seen as a tool for civic participation.	Engage in crossing cultural borders in order to understand others.
RQ 1: In what ways does the teacher foster critical literacy practices within the classroom?	<p><u>Emergent Codes</u></p> <p>Critical Conversations: Analyzes multiple and contradictory perspectives: the teacher introduces this free write and then facilitates the ensuing conversation, which will fall into multiple categories. He tells them to respond to the free-write prompt – “What makes a man or woman just or unjust?” Alex is shown standing behind the teacher’s desk. - Note: This transcript is a critical conversation spurred by the use of the free write prompt - a kind of open-ended questioning technique. There will be numerous examples of this throughout the semester. The critical conversation will become an example of the cross-section between critical pedagogy and the critical literacy practices that get fostered. Thus, it becomes a critical literacy practice.</p>			
	<p>Asks how texts position the reader as well as others: the teacher suggests that the media (in this case, cop shows) position teenagers in a negative way. This may be the first instance in which he brings up this critical media literacy notion. Note that one strategy the teacher uses is to assume the persona of a teenager. This is the first instance I have recorded of him doing</p>	<p>Focuses on those whose voices are marginalized: The teacher is asking students to speak about this scenario. Below, it does become evident that one student pushes back against a position that teens are vandals. Example: Mr. Shaw asks students to turn to page 208. There is a scenario and a question. (10:14 on the</p>	<p>Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: In this example, several students suggest that those who hold power (and everyone) are biased and possibly racist. This is a very good example of how the teacher offers an opportunity through a critical conversation for students to take up this critical perspective, which they do. So, this example should also fall</p>	<p>Language to exercise power and question injustice: The teacher will use the TED talk to facilitate this action by the students. Although this will take place within the context of the classroom, and not outside, the TED talk will be a means for some students (especially Echo) to take action. This is because he will position himself as an outsider.</p>

	<p>this.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: Let’s think about what influences your response to that question. Why do you think you only get community service or . . . ?</p> <p>Echo: Because we’re thinking as if it’s us. We don’t want to do it. We just want to get away with it as a warning.</p> <p>Alex: I saw it on cop shows.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: All right, the media has influenced that. Uh, your own personal feelings about yourself [assumes a persona] I don’t want to go to jail so I’m hoping that it’s just picking up trash on the side of the road . . .</p>	<p>Zoom mic.)</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: [reads] Imagine that you are an American teenager. You’ve been out one night with some friends and you’ve been vandalizing some cars . . . [see the book and zoom mic for the rest] . . . imagine you are arrested by the police. Imagine what your punishment will be . . . how do you think justice will best be served?</p>	<p>under RQ2.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Conversation about second article continues.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw reads an excerpt from one of the articles (zoom mic 11:10).</p> <p>Then he asks, “Do you think it’s ok for the government to chip away the ability for the people as we think about them, if you committed a crime that was big enough for you to get a jury trial. That means you go to court you sit down and as a part of the trial, twelve of your peers would come to a consensus about how you should be punished or whether or not you should be punished. They’ve done away with that. Do you think it’s ok if it’s just a small group of individuals who are in control of justice? Or should it be something that everybody is able to have a say in?”</p> <p>Maria: Everybody should have a say. This example should also fall under RQ2.</p>	<p>Example:</p> <p>Mr. Shaw tells students they are going to start doing research in the lab on their TED talks.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: It is about a topic of injustice that you decide to inform us on. So it could be a plethora of things. It could be that we don’t have electives here at school. It could be any number of things.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw reviews types of evidence for claims (p. 209 in book); empirical, logical, anecdotal,</p> <p>5:00</p> <p>More review about types of evidence.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw uses a current event (from Alepo) he heard on NPR (shared source with students).</p>
<p>RQ 2: <i>In what ways do the students engage in elements of Critical Literacy practices within the classroom?</i></p>	<p><u>Emergent Codes:</u></p>			
<p>Asks how texts position the reader as well as others: This is a second example in which Alex is a participant in a critical conversation about how the media positions people (in this case, according to race). Petch also takes this up.</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Focuses on the voices of those who are marginalized: This may serve as evidence for later discussions about his understanding of race relations.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>From Conversation between Young Esquire III and Lola:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lola asks him what his Name is. He says Dominican, Black, and Cuban. - Young Esquire III calls 	<p>Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: Here Caelyn resists being positioned as a teenager who vandalizes.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Alex asks what kind of vandalism. Mr. Shaw says something visible. Maybe spray paint the car. Maria protests and teacher says, “because you’re a crazy teenager.”</p> <p>Caelyn: But I’m not a crazy teenager.</p>	<p>Engages in crossing cultural borders in order to understand others: This is the first instance in which students try to imagine how perspectives may be different from an American one. Interestingly, Caelyn seems to not identify as American (her family is from Ghana). This point from Caelyn may fall in the counternarrative</p>	

	<p>Note: Mr. Shaw introduces news story about a man who was arrested in another country for having poppy seeds in his pocket. This example should also go in third column.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw asks what would you expect if it was in America?</p> <p>Maria: He would have a fair trial. Like they say innocent until proven guilty.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw asks if they think it would be seen the same way in the American judicial system.</p> <p>Alex: The media . . . is he white?</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: Ahh haaaa.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: I don't know, why does that matter if he's white?</p> <p>Alex: If he's Asian or White, then you're fine. But if you're Hispanic and black . . . yeah. The media is gonna be like, this black guy was . . .</p>	<p>her an overachiever</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She calls him an underachiever. He says, "no, I'm an average achiever." - Toward the end Young Esquire III says he's bored. 		<p>category (second column). On the other hand, Maria, whose family is Indian, does identify as American (both girls use pronouns to indicate how they self-position).</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Maria: Americans are different.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw asks her to talk about how they are different.</p> <p>Maria: We're very opinionated. We're so opinionated. We have opinions about anything and everything . . . I think the majority of people would not agree to it.</p> <p>Caelyn: And y'all would start a riot about it.</p> <p>They talk about how they think Filipinos may not be as vocal as Americans.</p> <p>Maybell: We have a different, like, culture, so we're not used to being like caned. We're in a democratic country so we have more like voice than in the Philippines.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw connects their conversation to two articles in the book. He asks them to read the articles in groups.</p>
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<p><i>Codes from Vasquez et al. (2013)</i></p>	<p>Disrupting the commonplace (Vasquez et al. 2013):</p> <p>Disrupting the taken for granted.</p> <p>Whose culture gets defined as common sense?</p> <p>Disrupting systems of meaning:</p> <p>“Social practices are systems of meaning at work in society’ (p. 9).</p> <p>Involves “unpacking social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces” (p. 9).</p> <p>No text is neutral.</p> <p>What frames or cultural models are used to position readers?</p> <p>How does language shape identity?</p> <p>“The texts we use to help students disrupt commonplace are semiotic, involving multiple sign systems” (p. 10).</p> <p>Ultimately looks at the underlying messages from any text. Teachers seek to unpack these messages.</p>	<p>Interrogating Multiple Perspectives (Vasquez et al. 2013):</p> <p>Participates in ongoing knowledge production and generation.</p> <p>Participants become critical inquirers – collaborative, examines what one knows from multiple perspectives.</p> <p>Acknowledges that knowledge is understood differently from different perspectives.</p>	<p>Unpacking issues socio-politically (Vasquez et al. 2013):</p> <p>Demonstrates a conscious awareness of language and how it works in powerful ways.</p> <p>Teachers create spaces (re-designing) for non-dominant groups to gain access to powerful discourses.</p> <p>Interrogates privilege and status, investigate oppression, uses resistance, dialogue, and public debate as tools to engage in the politics of daily life.</p>	<p>Taking social action: (Vasquez et al. 2013)</p> <p>Using language and other sign systems to get things done in the world.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to be actors rather than spectators in the world.</p> <p>Students compose narratives, counternarratives, letters, essays, reports, poems, plays, podcasts, and web pages to promote social change.</p> <p>Students search for answers to real-world problems.</p> <p>Students use critical social practices to rewrite their identities as social activists who challenge the status quo and demand change.</p> <p>CL becomes a call to position oneself differently in the world.</p> <p>Recognition of injustice gets transformed into action. Changing beliefs as a first step to action.</p> <p>Involves reflexivity - recognition of one’s personal complicity in maintaining the status quo. May also involve renaming and re-theorizing.</p>
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APPENDIX L**DATA EXCERPT FROM CRITICAL CONVERSATION IN SOPHOMORE
CLASS ON JANUARY 29**

Maria: Everybody should have a say.

Maybell: Everyone should have a say in it.

Mr. Shaw: Why is that?

Maria: Because they could be corrupt.

Young Esquire III: They could be biased. Or racist.

Maria: Overall everyone, they may say oh I'm not biased, I'm not biased, but deep down inside [interrupted] . . .

Young Esquire III: [interjecting] Subconsciously, they are.

Maria: [continues] . . . you know what you like, you know what you don't like. You know what you feel is right. So I feel like, no matter what, people have that little opinion behind what they say.

APPENDIX M**DATA EXCERPT FROM CRITICAL CONVERSATION IN SOPHOMORE
CLASS ON JANUARY 29**

Alex: The media . . . is he White?

Mr. Shaw: ah haaaaa. I don't know. Why does it matter if he's White?

Alex: If he's Asian or White, then you're fine. But if you're Hispanic and black . . .
yeah. The media is gonna be like, this black guy was . . . [interrupted]

Petch: [interjects, with sarcastic tone] Those silly Black guys causing trouble again.

Alex: [continues] . . . on drugs.

Mr. Shaw: [taking up Petch's sarcastic tone] They're trafficking man. Trying to push
weight . . . [with serious tone] So, it's more complicated, it's not just, you know, is he
American? What type of American? Who is he affiliated with? How does he look? Who
are his parents? What kind of neighborhood is he from? What was he wearing?

APPENDIX N

EXCERPT FROM SECOND PHASE (RQ1) OF SOPHOMORE CLASS DATA ANALYSIS (LARGER EMERGENT CODES)

RQ 1: In what ways does the teacher foster critical literacy practices within the classroom?						
Sharing personal history (teacher only)	critical conversations	Critical Text Production	References to /use of Popular Culture/use of technology	Use of non-traditional/canonical texts- includes multimodal	Critical Pedagogy: Leveling the field	Open-ended questions
<p>1/15/13 (sophs): Understands knowledge is historically constructed In the paideia seminar, the teacher begins a discussion of the concept of the token. He uses his own personal experiences as an outsider to explain.</p> <p>3/14 (Sophs): Asks how the text positions the reader as well as others: The teacher does two things here. He fosters CLP by assuming a persona and by providing details of his personal history. In doing so, he shares with the students how the text positioned him as a young man.</p>	<p>1/22/13 (sophs): Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: Written on board: Each time a man stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot or situation of others or strikes out against injustice he sends forth tiny ripples of hope.</p> <p>1/22/13 (sophs): Language to exercise power and question injustice: This excerpt also falls in the sociopolitical issues column. The teacher asks students to use written and oral (discussion) language.</p> <p>1/29/13 Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: Several students suggest that those who hold power are biased and possibly racist. example of how the teacher offers opp through a critical conv for</p>	<p>1/24/13 (Sophs): Language to exercise power and question injustice: The teacher will use the TED talk to facilitate this action by the students. Although this will take place within the context of the classroom, and not outside, the TED talk will be a means for some students (especially Echo) to take action. This is because he will position himself as an outsider, as the marginalized.</p> <p>2/11 (Sophs): Focuses on the voices of those who are marginalized: Teacher shares a TED talk that focuses on cultural stereotypes. He does this after CAELYN presents her ted talk on racism. This also falls in the sociopolitical</p>	<p>1/15/13 (sophs): Focuses on those whose voices are marginalized: The teacher connects the example from popular culture (Cosby Show; A Different World) to the poem by Pat Mora. He asks the students to consider her experience as someone who is in-between cultures.</p> <p>1/15/13 (Sophs): Popular culture and media are included as part of the curriculum: Teacher uses popular culture (Cosby Show) to link the concept of token to the Mora text they read.</p> <p>2/8 (Sophs): Focuses on the voices of those who are marginalized: Teacher</p>	<p>1/22/13 (sophs): Emphasizes critique as well as hope: The teacher introduces the idea of the TED talk. Here he frames it as a means to critique social injustices and through the free write, to examine the concept of hope. Later, he will ask the students to create their own TED talks.</p> <p>1/24/13 (sophs); Disrupting systems of meaning; Knowledge is historically constructed: This segment also appears below in the RQ2 section under focusing on sociopolitical issues. Teacher is writing on board the directions for viewing the Ken Robinson video. Identify the claim, the warrant, and grounds. He also wants them</p>	<p>1/31/13 (Sophs): Note: this is also noted in the Paideia seminar and critical conversations columns.</p> <p>Focuses on those whose voices are marginalized: in the traditional sense of education, the teacher's voice is privileged. Thus, in this context, the students become the marginalized. This is sported by the teacher telling me his use of the paideia seminar is an attempt to level the field. The second example reinforces this idea.</p> <p>Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: Here, Alex's comment seems to suggest he sees himself as not normal, which seems to support my interpretation of</p>	<p>1/31/13 (Sophs): Note: This is embedded within a paideia seminar: Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: The teacher asks the question that prompts several students to challenge the status quo. This belongs in RQ2 also. His questioning fosters the students critical perspective taking.</p> <p>Challenges the status quo of unequal power relations: The teacher asks the question that prompts several students to challenge the status quo. This belongs in RQ1 also.</p>

RQ 1: In what ways does the teacher foster critical literacy practices within the classroom?						
Sharing personal history (teacher only)	critical conversations	Critical Text Production	References to /use of Popular Culture/use of technology	Use of non-traditional/canonical texts- includes multimodal	Critical Pedagogy: Leveling the field	Open-ended questions
	students to take up this critical perspective. So, this example should also fall under RQ2 .	and the disrupting systems of meaning categories .	discusses the Andy Griffith show and who is not represented..	to identify the rhetorical appeals.	his use of sarcasm and shock to push back against the norm.	

APPENDIX O

EXCERPTS FROM STUDENT AND TEACHER DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CTCC EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE

Mr. Shaw	Shane	Angilé	Alex	Echo	Lola
<p>Context: Conversation between classes while teacher discusses some of the constraints for fostering CL practices.</p> <p>Date: 1/22</p> <p>Mark: It is early in the semester too, maybe there's not that sense of community yet.</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: And with this school its so interesting. It's a different. The schools so small you'd think, again its an assumption, you'd think that everyone knows each other so they should be comfortable no matter what class they're coming into.</p> <p>Mark: How many students roughly, 150?</p> <p>Mr. Shaw: Uh, it's about that, I would say, in just the high school classes about 150. Overall, about 170, because we have about</p>	<p>Context: First interview with Shane.</p> <p>Date: 2/17/13</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>I: Okay. Well, how about like... you went to a traditional middle school, I guess?</p> <p>R: Yeah.</p> <p>I: Could you compare it to that at all?</p> <p>R: Well if I did, I'd say it's a lot better.</p> <p>I: The middle college?</p> <p>R: Yeah.</p> <p>I: Okay. Are there specific ways that you would say it's better?</p> <p>R: The people aren't as mean. It's not as... it's not violent at all. My middle school was pretty violent.</p> <p>I: Really?</p> <p>R: Yeah. I was the only out person there, so a lot of it was towards me.</p> <p>I: Okay.</p>	<p>Context: First Interview with Angilé.</p> <p>Date: 3/18/13</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>I: Okay. So I wanted to ask you a little bit about the CTCC Early/Middle College. Can you tell me what you like about being there?</p> <p>R: You have... and you're on your own schedule basically.</p> <p>I: Anything else?</p> <p>R: The teachers there are cool.</p> <p>I: Yeah.</p> <p>R: If... but it's not that much from like regular high school. I kind of [inaudible 18:57.0] for a regular high school.</p> <p>I: I see that you have... I saw you had a Grimsley thing on your jacket.</p>	<p>Context: Alex's first interview.</p> <p>Date: 3/5/13</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>I: Let's see. So, we've talked a little bit about what you like about the early/middle college.</p> <p>R: Uh hmm.</p> <p>I: Can you... are there some specific things that really you think are really good about it?</p> <p>R: The short classes; in fact, I can graduate with an associate's. The classes there... well, the high school classes are all really easy. And I feel like the teachers purposely make them easy because they know about the workload that we're going to have to do because we're in college also.</p>	<p>Context: Echo's first interview.</p> <p>Date: 2/17/13</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>I: Okay. I kind of thought that might be your answer, from what we already talked about but I thought oh I'll go ahead and ask this question anyway. Okay. So about the school, I'm curious about your thoughts about the school. What do you like about being at the CTCC?</p> <p>R: For one, classes start at 12:20. Other schools are at 8:45.</p> <p>I: Yeah.</p> <p>R: And another one is, the classroom size. Each classroom has around 12 students. At a regular school, there'll be 30 students, 35 students, so the</p>	<p>Context: Lola's first interview.</p> <p>Date: 3/6/13</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>I: Is this your first year at the middle college?</p> <p>R: Yes it is.</p> <p>I: And tell me what you like about it?</p> <p>R: I like that the rooms are smaller so that we can get more attention. And that it's not as much drama as the larger middle schools which is the main reason why I went. And like when you need help with something like personally and you don't want to say in front of the whole class, the teacher will come and attend to you whenever you need it and you can</p>

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20 just taking college classes.	R:I hated it.		So, I like the challenge in the college classes, even though none of them have been challenging yet. I kind of am waiting for that one that's hard.	teacher would just give out work and wouldn't care about the students.	go before and after school and get help.