Pre-service Teachers Engaging with Critical Pedagogies

And Designing Civic Action Units

by

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ABSTRACT

This research shares findings from a qualitative case study featuring pre-service teachers enrolled in an undergraduate English methods course at a large public university. The participants engaged in a semester long course focused on different critical pedagogies, such as culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014), funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), and multicultural education (hooks, 1992). The purpose of the study was to determine what effect the study of critical pedagogies would have on the pre-service teachers' design of a civic action unit for a secondary English language arts context. In terms of which critical pedagogies influenced the design of the civic action units, how the critical pedagogies were adapted for specific contexts, and how the critical pedagogies are negotiated with other systemic educational forces.

The data collection occurred over the final six weeks of the course and in a follow-up interview a month later. Data were drawn from the following sources: (1) participant's weekly reflections, (2) audio recorded class discussions, (3) researcher field notes, (4) participant's civic action units, and (5) follow-up interviews. The participant reflections, civic action units, and interviews went through three rounds of coding and were categorized to identify salient findings. The audio recordings and field notes were referenced to provide contextual details.

These findings show that when pre-service teachers engage in an ongoing dialogue about critical pedagogies, they design civic action units that apply a variety of critical pedagogies for a unique context while accounting for different systemic forces including educational standards, colleagues, and parents and policies. For the course, the

participants were able to pick their unit's focus and were responsible for the unit's design. The participants designed units that engaged students in consciousness-raising experiences, and created opportunities for students to critically reflect on their world and take action to improve it. As a result, the participants in this study all reported that they planned on using their civic action unit in their future classrooms.

DEDICATION

To:
Avery

This dissertation
–this step–
is the culmination
of countless hours
years
lifetimes
of loved ones
who persevered
sacrificed
dreamed
for us.

From:
Anthony

Jesús – Diane

José – Rosa, Clarence – Helen

Rafael – Maria, Augustin – Encarnacion, William – Velma, Morton – Carrie

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INTRODUCTION

> Education is fundamental to democracy… no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgements and act in a socially responsible way. (Giroux, 2011, p. 3)

The first time I got on a soapbox as a high school teacher was during my first year, on the last day before summer break. My students had spent the last month reading articles and watching documentaries about different social justice issues. They wrote their final essays about one of the issues presented using sources I provided to them. Aside from giving them a final project to demonstrate their writing growth and proficiency, I had hoped to inform and inspire students to take action for these issues.

But that didn't happen.

Were my students moved by the stories of human trafficking? Of course. Did they learn about issues about access to clean water? Yes. But the unit did not ignite a *Dead Poet's Society*-esque zeal for social change I had imagined, so I tried to use my final comments to spark a fire where my unit seemed to fail. While I'll never know the long-term effects of that unit, I hope at the very least it made my students more globally aware, but I wasn't satisfied. I wanted to do better at supporting my students to take action for themselves and for others as critical civically engaged citizens.

With each new school year, I continued to grow and evolve as a teacher designing and redesigning my classroom to support students toward this goal. Some of the changes in my teaching practice included: encouraging more student choice in their inquiry topics

(Quijada, Cahill, & Bradley, 2013; Irizarry & Brown, 2014; Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015), teaching texts from and writing in real-world genres (Bazerman, 1997; Graham & Perin, 2007; Bazerman et al., 2017), and holding space in my class for students to express themselves (Jocson, 2004; Fisher, 2005; Williams 2015). These changes may not seem related to my early, heavy handed approach to social justice, but they are connected by the belief that young people are powerful sources of influential change. In fact, these changes brought my teaching more in-line with my actual beliefs. Students *can* do great things, if we allow them. As a teacher, I was no longer responsible for being the source of knowledge. I was no longer the classroom deity who decided what was important and who judged solutions as being valid or not. Instead, I became the guide, the coach, the cheerleader for my students as they took their own paths toward being critical and civically engaged citizens. For example, one of my former students went on to participate in March for Our Lives protests at the state capital as a senior, and then during her freshman year of college volunteered to canvas neighborhoods helping people register to vote.

Now, more than ever, we need teachers and teacher educators who are willing to assume this vulnerable, multifaceted role to better support students who are already on the move toward changing the world. In 2018, America saw young people exercise their civic voice in ways never before seen from so many people not old enough to vote yet. After the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting on February 14th, 2018, a group of high school students from the school decided enough was enough, and they organized a grassroots movement seeking to put an end to gun violence. The movement,

March for Our Lives, spread across the country with hundreds of student-led chapters and millions of students participating in protests and walk-outs. This political energy carried over into the 2018 midterm elections. In Generation Z's (18-21 years old) first midterm election, their 4.5 million ballots pushed the vote totals of Generation Z, Millennials, and Generation X past the vote totals of Baby Boomer and older generations (Cilluffo & Fry, 2019). Beyond these traditional modes of civic engagement, young people have used social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to participate in social movements including, #BlackLivesMatter to raise awareness and intervene in violence affecting Black communities, and the #MeToo movement to support victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Encouraging students to be more critical and civically engaged, of course, isn't without challenge. In my work with pre-service teachers, the main concern I hear is about administrator and district pushback. Teachers who work outside the narrow norms of schools are often perceived as troublemakers, becoming targets to be fired or pushed out. Pre-service teachers also worry about how this work prepares students for standardized tests, or how this work meets state mandated educational standards. Without a doubt, these are all understandable concerns.

Despite these fears, many teachers want to make a difference in students' lives and want to help students change the world by enacting some form of socially conscious education in their classrooms. On the popular teacher resource site, Teachers Pay Teachers, a search for "social justice" yields over 5,000 hits with posters, lesson plans, and whole units evoking the term social justice. Any teacher willing to pay a few bucks,

can get user rated materials to bring social justice into their classroom. Entrepreneurial teachers are not the only ones creating and sharing classroom materials focused on social justice; many professional organizations are working to provided teachers with these kinds of resources as well. Looking on the website readwritethink.org, a similar resource supported by the International Literacy Association (ILA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), out of the nearly 1300 published classroom resources, 132 were categorized under the theme of "social action."

Teaching with Care

As a young teacher hoping to make a difference in my students' lives, I did not know how to improve upon my early attempts of teaching for social justice. It wasn't until I took a graduate course on culturally sustaining pedagogy that I felt empowered to take the next steps in improving my teaching practice. In the class, we read seminal texts starting with Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Then, we worked our way through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2010) to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012). We looked at asset pedagogies including Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al, 1992), Third Space (Gutierrez, 2008) and Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). From this survey of literature, I was able to name the problems I had experienced as an early teacher, then apply research-based practices to better support my students.

Over the years, I have one to understand this work as critical pedagogy. Building upon ideas such as Freire's (1970) critical consciousness and praxis, education scholars have explored how education can support students in critically reflecting on the world

and taking action for themselves and others. According to Giroux (2011), "Critical pedagogy within schools… are modes of intervention dedicated to creating those democratic public spheres where individuals can think critically, relate sympathetically to the problems of others, and intervene in the world in order to address major social problems" (p. 13). For this study, I will use the term critical pedagogies to refer to different pedagogies, methods, and strategies that work to engage in critical consciousness, promote empathy and understanding, and create opportunities for reflective action (praxis) to address social problems.

Due to the situated nature of critical pedagogy, Giroux (2011) reminds us that, "Critical pedagogy is not about an a priori method that simply can be applied regardless of context. It is the outcome of particular struggles and is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources" (p. 4). While resources and materials, like those shared on Teachers Pay Teachers and Read, Write, Think, are necessary to support teachers, great care needs to be taken by the teacher when deciding to incorporate critical pedagogy-oriented work into the classroom. Resources and materials must be adapted for the specific contexts of the students taking into consideration sociocultural and historical experiences. This requires an intimate knowledge of the different communities that students come from, the challenges these communities face, and what students know and bring to the classroom to transform their communities. A survey of 30 urban middle school English language arts teachers, found that "homegrown teachers, teachers whom the students knew as relatives, friends or

neighbors" possessed community insights that supported their advocacy for students and their culturally honoring curriculum design (Blasingame, 2018).

Many pre-service teachers are not from the communities where they will be teaching. According to a 2018 national survey, 52% enrolled in public school were projected to be non-white, but only 25% of undergraduate pre-service teachers were people of color. (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018). Therefore, while over half of school aged students are non-white, teacher preparation programs are still predominately white. Recognizing this gap between teachers and students, it becomes clear that teachers may lack this intimate knowledge that is the basis for critical pedagogy. Teachers not from their students' communities are unable to work from the position of an insider with the intimate knowledge of the community like students are able to. As a result, teachers may not want to put themselves in this vulnerable position of not having the answers. Others might avoid this work; afraid they may accidentally offend students in the process.

Unfortunately, avoiding important yet difficult issues is an act to maintain power and control in a classroom. As a result, teachers sometimes choose to assume a cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1985) perspective, in which they stick to traditional texts and methods of teaching in the name of developing more "literate" people. While others may avoid difficult topics by teaching to the test or deferring to the limited scope of standards (Celaya, 2018). Avoiding real world problems and reducing education to the dissemination of a particular dominant culture, or hiding behind neoliberal models of education, in which schools serve the purpose of creating workers through

standardization and testing (Brass, 2016), will not prepare students to be civically engaged transformers of the systems of oppression they experience presently.

The Study

English education needs more teachers who are committed to taking on these challenges alongside students, and to developing people who engage in critical consciousness, respond empathetically to others, and take action to better the world. As a pre-service teacher, I was never asked to design for social justice or civic action. I didn't know all the possibilities–or all the challenges–that comes with such work. Therefore, I designed my methods course to support pre-service teachers as they designed for social justice and civic action. To support my pre-service teachers' development to be critical pedagogues, I shared various texts about different critical pedagogies that were transformative for me as an early career teacher. Connecting this theory to practice, I ask my pre-service teachers to design educational materials throughout the semester, including a culminating civic action unit (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015). Students designed these materials by applying the critical pedagogies we had been learning throughout the semester for their current internships or future classrooms.

For this study, I explore how five pre-service English teachers in my methods of teaching course engaged with critical pedagogies, and how they applied those critical pedagogies when designing their civic action units. To understand how critical pedagogies informed the design of the civic action units, this study answers the following questions:

1. What aspects of critical pedagogies influence the design on civic action units?

2. How are critical pedagogies adapted for the specific contexts in which the civic action units are designed?
3. In what ways are critical pedagogies negotiated with other systemic educational forces (i.e. standards, administrators, district policies, parents)?

The data for the study includes the pre-service teachers' weekly reflections, recordings of class discussions, researcher field notes, and the pre-service teachers' final civic action units. These data were collected over the final six weeks of the methods course. Additionally, the five pre-service teachers selected for this study also participated in follow-up interviews with the researcher.

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher educators can prepare pre-service English language arts teachers to design curriculum to be inclusive and support all students, even if the teacher may not be familiar with a school's community and community needs. The English classroom is uniquely positioned to promote civic action through critical pedagogies in support of the various academic skills students are expected to learn in an English classroom, including: "reading, writing, critical analysis, public speaking, media literacy, and critical language awareness" (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015, p. 93). However, these academic skills are often severed from their real-world applications, leaving students with decontextualized skills that only appear to serve testing mandates. The pre-service teachers in this study possessed the content knowledge to teach these academic skills, but when they connected that knowledge to critical pedagogies their passion–that heart, that love–for teaching radiated in their conversations

and in their civic action units. They worked diligently to design units that would change the world for their students, schools, and communities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire, 1970, p. 73)

As a young teacher, I believed it was my responsibility to impart my students with knowledge, because they were ignorant about the content and the world. My intentions were good. I still believe that. But this problematic perspective of my students and my role as a teacher were heavily shaped by experiences in my teacher education program. I was the professional, the expert. I was the one in charge of the classroom, the authority. What students learned was a reflection of my knowledge and abilities. However, despite my best efforts, I was still dissatisfied with the work I was doing. Students were learning about important issues, but their engagement stopped at the end of the unit. Traditional approaches to learning, where I was the source of knowledge and students were the receptacles in which I deposited this knowledge, did not produce transformers of the world.

Critical Consciousness and Praxis

This study leans on the intertwined concepts of praxis and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) as a framework for teaching and learning. Despite my best efforts, I failed to recognize and support the critical consciousness of my students and create opportunities for engagement in praxis. With these two key concepts, Freire argues that

in order for the oppressed to achieve freedom they must engage in critical consciousness and praxis. Weffort (1967) explains that, “the awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontents precisely because these discontents are real components of an oppressive situation” (as cited in Freire, 2000, p. 36). From critical consciousness, the oppressed must emerge from their consciousness and fight their oppression. This is done through praxis, which calls for, “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). According to Freire (1970), critical consciousness is inseparable from praxis. Without praxis, critical consciousness only serves to inform the oppressed of their situation. And without critical consciousness, praxis will fail to address the oppressor, and leave the oppressed in the same situation.

The process of supporting critical consciousness begins with the teachers positioning themselves as co-investigators engaging in dialogue with the students. Dialogue positions the teacher and student relationship of mutual trust and respect for each other’s thoughts and is dynamic in the knowledge the dialogue produces. This is in opposition to “anti-dialogue,” which Freire (1974) characterizes as a hierarchical relationship. In anti-dialogue, there is no understanding or “empathy” between the teacher and student, which is characterized as loveless, mistrustful, and acritical. When teachers engage in dialogue with students, they enact what Freire calls “problem-posing education,” where teachers are no longer owners of knowledge, but reflect and reshape their thinking in collaboration with students. With the students no longer as passive listeners, but active producers of knowledge, the teacher, “presents the material to the students for their consideration and re-considers [their] earlier considerations as the

students express their own" (p. 81). In doing so, the teacher creates a classroom environment that allows for student experiences, knowledge, and research to support the "emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (p. 81).

Critical Pedagogy

Building on this work, scholars have recognized this branch of educational research as critical pedagogy. According to The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research, "Critical pedagogy supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students and calls upon teachers to recognize how schools have historically embraced theories and practices that serve to unite knowledge and power in ways that sustain asymmetrical relationships of power and maintain the status quo" (Adkins, 2014, p. 212). Henry Giroux (2011), one of the earliest scholars of critical pedagogy, contends that critical pedagogy is essential to maintaining a democratic society, and that students and teachers, through critical pedagogy, are responsible for creating a fair and more just world for everyone.

Educational research that takes up Freire's call for critical consciousness and praxis-oriented teaching, or that strives to empower culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students have taken on many names over the years. As Vossoughi and Gutiérrez (2017) describe, "Critical pedagogy is a multi-voiced field and movement that analyzes the relationship between education and oppression in order to help bring about social transformation" (p. 140). For the sake of brevity, this study refers to the different contributions to this "multi-voiced field and movement" as critical pedagogies if the work engages in critical consciousness, promotes empathy and

understanding, and creates opportunities for reflective action (praxis) to address social problems.

It is important here to remember Giroux's (2011) cautious reminder to educators, that critical pedagogies are not a set of methods or practices that can be applied to any context or classroom. Critical pedagogy requires educators to carefully consider the specific historical and social contexts of their students. The various critical pedagogies in this literature review and study are not intended to be a set of best practices, which would run in opposition to the work of these scholars (Alim & Paris, 2017; Smagorinsky, 2009). Instead, these critical pedagogies are intended to support the contextual and dynamic possibilities of critical pedagogy in the classroom by providing the pre-service teacher participants in this study a variety of perspectives to draw pedagogical inspiration from in their future classrooms.

Challenging Systems of Education

Work in critical pedagogy seeks to challenge the limiting and oppressive nature of schooling. Critical pedagogies often critique schools using Freire's (1970) metaphor of the banking model of education, which describes students as empty vessels that are filled with knowledge by the teachers. In this description of schools, teachers are the source of power and knowledge in the classroom, and students have no control of their learning. In this model, students are not given the opportunity to critically examine the information they are being taught, and as a result are ill-equipped to challenge unjust systemic oppressions. This model of schooling only serves those in power to maintain power. For example, when Latinx students only saw white authors in their curriculum, they

perceived that to mean Latinos were dumb, not smart, and incapable of producing novels and texts that had academic value (Irizarry, 2017).

Despite the work of critical pedagogues to challenge this reality (hooks, 1994; Ladsen-Billings, 1995), we still see these same oppressive systems in education today.

By examining educational inequality in regard to race, social class, and sex and gender, Smagorinsky (2017) "tentatively" concludes that schools today primarily, "serve the same people they were originally designed to accommodate: students of relative affluence who affiliate with the institution's promise that school achievement will pay off in life success" (p. 210). Despite the growing number of nonwhite students in schools today and the increased demand for high school and college diplomas from those seeking employment, schools have changed little to better address the needs of their changing populations; instead, they have continued to demand these students to adapt to and adopt the norms of expectations of others.

On a national scale, Brass (2015) has examined how teachers, schools, and students have been left out of the development of the Common Core Standards (CCS), allowing policy entrepreneurs, trade groups, testing companies, and corporate foundations to create de facto national curriculum. These neoliberal education policies and reforms (Brass, 2016) have been used to push high stakes assessments, attack public education, and support commercial publishers, entrepreneurs, and technology companies. These policies and movements have been used to serve hegemonic interests in curriculum (Brass, 2017) and exclude non-dominant identities and cultures from the classroom.

This reality is especially true in Arizona, where this study takes place. The pre-service teachers in this study are entering a local education system that has historically underserved immigrants and students of color. Arizona's oppressive English-Only laws, which ban teachers from using a student's home language to teach them English, has resulted in the lowest four-year graduation rates for English Language Learners in the country at 18% (Sanchez, 2017). Additionally, the department of education and the state legislature banned successful ethnic studies classes, targeting the successful Tucson Unified School District Mexican American Studies program (Cabrera et al., 2014). The ethnic studies ban resulted in the termination of the director of the Mexican American studies director, Sean Arce, and banned dozens of books by authors of color (Blasingame, 2012). The law, HB 2281 has since been ruled as unconstitutional. And more recently, an investigation by the Arizona Republic, a local newspaper, revealed that black and Native students were being suspended at higher rates than white students (Altavena, 2019). Teachers entering the classroom in Arizona must navigate educational systems that has systematically ignored, silenced, and oppressed students of color.

Cultural Pedagogy

Continuing the transformative work to imagine a radically different education system, one that honors diverse students and their cultures, Ladson-Billings (1995a) calls for educators to adopt what she called a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Within a culturally relevant framework, teachers incorporate student cultural identities into the classroom and curriculum, not only to boost academic achievement, but to affirm students' cultural identities and develop their critical perspectives to challenge inequities

in school and beyond. This new term has had a long-lasting impact in educational research, but, "much of the work being done under the umbrella of CRP comes up far short" of its intended goals (Alim & Paris, p. 5, 2017). Beyond linking school to student culture, like using hip-hop to teach poetry, much of the work in CRP fails to develop students' critical consciousness to challenge inequity in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Along with the call for more culturally relevant pedagogy, Gay (2010) extends the idea of relevancy to include, "ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students," (p. 22) in what she calls culturally responsive pedagogy. This approach seeks to also address other issues of culture and how it interacts between schools and students beyond academic success.

Building on these ideas, Paris (2012) questions whether the terms relevant and responsive do enough to support the languages and cultures of students. While culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies have been influential in improving the experiences of students from non-dominant cultures, Paris argues for a new term that does more to sustain the linguistic and literate diversity of students. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) seeks to push back against deficit views that schools have historically had for students of color (Paris, 2012), and reframe educational outcomes outside of the "white-gaze" that much of education built (Alim & Paris, 2017). Additionally, echoing Ladson-Billings's call for developing critical consciousness of the inequities present in education, Paris and Alim (2014) extend this call to also include critical reflection of the ways in

which underrepresented cultures promote regressive ideas (e.g. homophobia, misogyny, racism) (Paris & Alim, p. 92, 2014). This move toward culturally sustaining pedagogy, represents a more holistic approach to examining the interactions between schools, students, and culture.

Since the conception of culturally sustaining pedagogy, researchers have continued to lean on the work of CSP and its predecessors to explore other ways in which educators can take up critical cultural stances in their classrooms. Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen extend CSP to the work teachers do prior to entering their classrooms with a culturally proactive teaching approach (2015). To be a culturally proactive teacher, one must anticipate the various cultural, literate, and linguistic identities students may bring to the class, and proactively work to design readings, assignments, and the classroom space to support these students.

Others have applied CSP socio-historically to the oppressions different cultures face within schooling environments. According to McCarty and Lee (2014), "Western schooling has been the crucible in which these contested desires [for tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification] have been molded, impacting Native peoples in ways that have separated their identities from their languages, lands, and worldviews" (p. 103). In response, CSP should not only seek to sustain but *revitalize* linguistic, literate, and cultural knowledges through a culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy.

In another extension of CSP, San Pedro (2018) takes up Paris and Alim's (2014) call for educators enacting CSP to problematize culture when necessary to put forth a

culturally disruptive pedagogy as a way to challenge hegemonic cultural norms. In this work, San Pedro explores how a white student in a Native American literature class problematizes white culture in the process of promoting and sustaining Indigenous cultures. Culturally disruptive pedagogy in an important extension of CSP to understand the importance of engaging *all* students in this critical work. Culturally sustaining pedagogy is not just important for students from non-dominant cultures, but it is important for everyone to learn and work toward.

In keeping with Alim and Paris's (2017) call for a dynamic understanding of culture, one that recognizes that culture is not static and can change between contexts and from person-to-person, educators need to be mindful of youth popular culture and digital 21st century literacies as well. As culture shapes our identity, youth popular culture also plays a role in students' lives, and how they display and interact with that culture with digital 21st century literacies. Teachers should work to include these student assets into their classrooms in meaningful ways that extend the work of young people to challenge issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and social histories (Haddix, Garcia, and Price-Dennis, 2017).

Given all these possible applications of CSP, it is important to remember that culturally sustaining pedagogy is not only about content. We must approach CSP with an ecological framework (Lee, 2017), which takes into consideration all the various intersections of power and culture in students' lives. Culturally sustaining pedagogy is about the psychological and physiological wellbeing of people as well as the academic. By taking a culturally sustaining stance in the classroom, teachers are not merely seeking

to sustain students' culture as a method to meet educational standards or master curriculum. Teachers must also critique and address other aspects of the learning environment that may not be culturally sustaining, such as, classroom rules, school and district policies, and behavior intervention strategies. To sustain students' linguistic, literate, and culture Lee calls on teachers to, "include not only what we think of as academic skills,… but equally the problems of sustaining a democracy, resisting stereotypes, engaging in activism for that which is just, and learning to be resilient in the face of changing and evolving sources of threat" (p. 270). While culturally sustaining pedagogy may lead to increased success on academic assessments, the work of creating a more culturally sustaining education is a worthy end unto itself.

Asset Pedagogy

As mentioned in the previous section, moving toward a culturally sustaining pedagogy requires educators to recognize and honor the various knowledge, skills, histories, and experiences students bring to the classroom. These assets are important sources of cultural knowledge and experiences that can support a student's learning. But it is important to recognize that leveraging these assets is not enough. Educators must work to challenge the binary that exists between out-of-school and in-school knowledge and allow for student knowledge to influence the curriculum and for the curriculum to support the student's cultural experiences and critical consciousness outside of the classroom (Hull & Shultz, 2001).

In their seminal study, Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) studied the home-based contexts of working class, Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona, and

found that the students from these homes and communities possessed a wealth of cultural and cognitive knowledge that were previously unknown to the teacher. The researchers conclude that not only do these funds of knowledge have the potential to be used within the classroom to support student learning, but they also can disrupt stereotypes, held by teachers. The researchers give the example that, "Anglo children may spend a summer in France and we make a big deal about it, by asking them to speak to the class about their summer activities! Carlos spends summers in Magdalena, Mexico, yet he's probably rarely been asked to share his experiences with anyone" (p. 136). Understanding the funds of knowledge students not only bring to class, but are constantly developing, can challenge deficit view of students as well. Students who work or have to take care of their siblings are no longer "ignoring their schoolwork" but developing funds of knowledge that carry real world value.

Beyond the knowledge and skills that students bring to class, there are deeper pools of valuable knowledge that students have that are often ignored by traditional school settings. Using a Critical Race Theory lens, Yosso (2008) identifies six dynamic forms of capital that are often excluded when looking at a student's cultural assets. Within a Community Cultural Wealth perspective, students also bring aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital to the classroom. By recognizing students' knowledge as well as community knowledge, teachers can better serve students who are marginalized by school systems.

By honoring students' Funds of Knowledge and Community Cultural Wealth, teachers can begin to connect the classroom (formal learning) and the out of school

(informal learning) in what Gutiérrez (2008) describes as Third Space. These Third Spaces, where the formal and informal intersect, enact what Vygotsky (1978) conceptualized as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In a Third Space, students' out of school knowledge can help them develop their academic literacies. Despite the potential of asset pedagogy to improve students' academic literacies, it is important to remember that the end point is never a test or a final project or a grade. Honoring student assets and developing their academic literacies is about preparing young people for the world they inhabit a world in need of their voice and knowledge for social transformation.

Teacher Education

With these calls for a more humanizing pedagogy, teacher education has a role to play in preparing pre-service teachers to adapt and apply critical pedagogies to different contexts. Morrell (2005) calls upon English teachers to work towards what he describes as a critical English education. Morrell argues for two approaches to this transformative work which take up Freire's call for critical consciousness and praxis. First, teachers need to instruct students on how to interrogate and critically examine texts, and then to become producers of these critical texts in the struggle for social justice. Second, teachers need to establish themselves as public intellectuals who advocate for their students and their profession in public spaces of influence.

However, part of the challenge in preparing teachers to adopt a critical English education approach starts with teacher education programs. As mentioned earlier, students in undergraduate teacher programs are often overwhelmingly white, and critical

pedagogy's critique of systems of oppression and inequality, which challenge the status quo, often goes unaddressed or examined (Allen, Hancock, Starker-Glass, et al., 2017). Additionally, critical pedagogies require an intimate knowledge of the communities and contexts students are coming from. With many pre-service teachers coming from communities that are not representative of the communities they will be working in; they may not have the experiential knowledge to conceptualize how to teach students from different cultural backgrounds while in their undergraduate program.

Even after undergraduates leave teacher education programs, there are countless forces that influence teachers' decisions in their classrooms. From school communities to department and district policies to educational policies and standards, teachers must take into consideration more factors than what a teacher education program can effectively prepare them for. Researchers have created potential frameworks for teachers to evaluate pedagogical decisions within their specific contexts. The New London Group (1996) put forth their "Theory of Pedagogy" to address the curricular decisions being made in regard to their idea of multiliteracies. This theory consists of four dynamic and interconnected stages: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Through this framework, educators engage their students in literacy practices that are contextual and have explicit instruction, and, as a result, they help students address real world issues critically both in class and for a lifetime.

However, schools are increasingly turning to scripted curriculum in which teachers are restricted in what and how they modify lessons to meet the various needs of their students (Milner, 2013; Thomas & LeBlanc, 2014; Timberlake, Thomas, & Barrett,

2017). These policies and practices are a result of the growing neoliberal influence on education that is both acritical and nonresponsive to students and their lived realities. Navigating and challenging these systems as a teacher can be stressful and create a contentious work environment for teachers who wish to adopt critical and culturally sustaining pedagogical stances. To help understand this difficult navigation, Smagorinsky, Lakly, and Johnson (2002) conceptualize the choices teachers have when faced with scripted curriculum or mandates that run contrary to their beliefs about teaching. Teachers can acquiesce to these mandates and just accept them. Teachers can accommodate the mandates in a way that does result in significant pedagogical sacrifices from the teacher. And, more seldom, teachers can openly resist mandates if they are severe enough that there are no other options to do what's best for students.

Along with evaluating classroom decisions and navigating systemic mandates, teachers must also contend with educational standards. There has been a movement to accommodate standards by changing traditional systems of assessment for standards-based grading (Schimmer, 2016), which encourages students to move away from "point chasing" to mastering standards. However, others have called on teachers to redefine the influence of standards and prepare students for "literacy for life" by adopting a post-core view of the Common Core State Standards. Whether the standards are Common Core or another set of standards, "youth should learn literacy in a way that helps them not only in passing state tests or college entrance exams, but also in managing their personal lives; serving others in the community; making reasoned familial, social, and political decisions; or taking action to end injustices in the world" (Moje, Giroux, Muehling, 2017,

p.5). From this perspective, the standards are no longer a checklist to be accomplished, but more like a mile marker on the way to a greater destination.

Teachers who adopt critical pedagogies need to be aware of the contextual nature of education as well as the navigational capital necessary to engage students with pedagogical practices that will support them in transformational literacy for life.

Designing with Critical Pedagogies Toward Civic Action

Education that supports critical consciousness and praxis must also seek to sustain student cultures and be willing to honor the knowledge and experiences that are brought to the classroom. However, undergraduate, pre-service teachers are not always being prepared to address these issues, and they are entering a career field that has systematically worked to oppress students from non-dominant cultures or identities. It is a moral imperative for teachers to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and agency to produce transformational change, not only in school but as adults as well. Giroux (2011) tells us that critical pedagogies are can be a way to save democracies by preparing students to be, "critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgement and action in a socially responsible way" (p. 3). It is important to understand that civic engagement is not limited to the content scope of social studies teachers.

While voting, petitioning, contacting representatives, are important and meaningful civic actions, advocating for oneself and for others is not limited to government processes or election years. As Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015) argue, it is vital "for young people today to be able to interact with and engage in civic dialogue both as students and as adults. *Enacting literacy is a civic action*. We compel, we

advocate, we comply through the words we wield. Just as importantly, our civic pathways are stifled if we do not know how to articulate our social needs or are silent" (p. 58). Literacy as civic action has become increasingly important as digital communication and social media continues to influence and impact our communities and discourse. In an era of "fake news," the 24-hour news cycle, and when tweets can change national policy on a whim, English classrooms have been charged with the responsibility of developing students' critical media literacy (Morrell, Duenas, Garcia-Garza, & Lopez, 2013) to understand how corporate media and digital media influence and shape people's perspectives of the world.

Designing curriculum toward civic action does not mean that teachers must abandon the important content of the English language arts classroom. Much of the work teachers do now can overlap within a civically oriented curriculum (de los Ríos, López, Morrell, 2015; Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015). Teaching for civic action requires intentional and thoughtful curricular design that addresses political nuance and carefully navigates high stakes subjects and realities (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Undergraduate methods courses offer a space where pre-service teachers can practice designing civic action curriculum in a low-risk environment where they can be supported and encouraged by their peers and instructor before attempting this work with students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

> Authentic liberation—the process of humanization—is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it…. Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire, 1970, p. 79-80)

It was a hot August afternoon when the temperature is at its peak, usually over 115 degrees. But this is not foreign for me. This fall semester marked the start of my ninth year of schooling at the university where I started as an eager secondary history education major, which soon switched to secondary English education, and where I was now on the verge of finishing my terminal degree. I climbed the familiar shallow stairs of the old English building, currently being renovated in sections, to a classroom filled with pre-service teachers waiting for their instructor. I have been where they are. I know their program, their frustrations, the paths they've taken to this class that I had to take as well.

But I hoped this class would push all of us into unfamiliar places.

The room was warm and muggy. Students were fanning themselves with their copy of the textbook and trying to move a little as possible to not add to the pressure in the room. We rushed through the normal course logistics: introductions, syllabus, information cards. Then I sent them on their way, 20 minutes, ahead of schedule to begin reading the biggest change in my course syllabus, and the most foundational reading for the rest of the semester: Chapter 2 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970).

Earlier in the summer, I was struggling to revise my course syllabus to be more centered on critical pedagogies, an effort inspired by my previous class who wanted more in terms of how to create classroom environments that supported students and helped them take action. I returned to Freire throughout the summer trying to think of ways to bring in more discussion of critical consciousness and praxis. When the following section stuck out in a way it had not before:

> The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own. The role of the problem-posing educator is to create; together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos* (Freire, 1970, p. 81, emphasis in the original)

In many ways, I had been approaching this course redesign from a banking model (Freire, 1970) perspective. I wanted to make deposits of knowledge with my pre-service teachers, and in return, they would be able to repeat back key definitions and popular phrases such as: "student centered," "inclusive of diverse perspectives," and "support *all* of our students." While the ideas represented by these phrases are important, I wanted to work alongside my pre-service teachers to transform the mere repetition of these popular phrases into authentic knowledge that guided and framed their decision making.

With this new focus, I decided to start the course with students reading the seminal work that is frequently cited in the other course readings I had selected. I was trusting my students to persevere through confusion and challenges to examine the text for their professional and personal consideration, and, like Freire describes, I was trusting

myself to live this approach in practice by opening myself to re-consider my earlier considerations as a result of engaging in dialogue with my students.

Thankfully, by the next class, the air conditioner was once again circulating cool air throughout the building. Before we begin discussing the reading, I invited students to conceptualize their theory of learning. In other words, how do they think learning happens. A challenging task for pre-service teachers, despite their numerous education courses. I tell them there are no wrong answers. Some students talk about the role of the teacher, others assert students must want to learn, and a few describe the communal aspect of teaching. After sharing with their peers, I explain their next assignment: find or compose a photo that represents your theory of learning. This modified photovoice (Zenkov, Taylor, & Harmon, 2017), is meant to build community and understanding as we prepare to critically discussion teaching and learning the rest of the semester. To model my expectations for the assignment (and establish my persona as a teacher), I shared my own photo (see figure 1) and theory of learning.

In this photo, on stage is a group of Latinx youth performers who share their knowledge and experiences through song, poetry, and drama. They are performing on a stage that would have been built during the Jim Crow-era, when the law would not have allowed them to be in such a space. In the audience are teacher-educators, like me, who are there to learn from the young people on stage. I use this photo to connect my theory of learning to the ideas we are about to discuss, such as: the teacher-student and students-teachers relationship, the recognition of oppressive systems of education, and the power of student action.

Figure 1. Photovoice Example

Our conversation that night explored the pervasiveness of the banking model in modern classrooms, the appropriateness of political expression in an English classroom, and whether or not older texts like *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* were still relevant. Some students were on board with Freire's ideas from the get-go. Others had their reservations citing diversity initiatives, project-based learning, and technology as evidence that times had indeed changed. I could feel the tension in our discussion. At the time, I worried that I lit a fuse I wasn't prepared for.

But that first reading, and discussion were never meant to be the solution.

Raising one's critical consciousness of a reality does not occur in neat, linear steps, but it is an ongoing process of becoming that we are all continuously undergoing. Part of me was discouraged that night that not more of my students were "on board" with

these challenging topics. But I had to remind myself that night, and throughout the semester, that I was embarking on a semester long process. The critical conversations we had that day and continued to have contributed to each student's own process of becoming a more critical educator (hooks, 1994). Even the timeframe that I had, a semester, is an arbitrary amount of time for a process that would not end, just as it did not begin, with my course.

Informed by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011; hooks, 1994), humanizing research (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014), and critical English education (Morrell, 2005), this study employed a qualitative case study (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) approach to inquiry. This study was grounded in the diverse knowledges, experiences, and literacies that the pre-service teachers and I, the researcher and their instructor, shared within our dialogical community (Freire, 1974; Paris, 2011; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2013). In learning from and with these pre-service teachers, I wanted to understand the complexities and challenges they faced and worked through when designing curriculum that was unfamiliar to their education experiences.

To honor the experiences of the participants, this study presents findings using a case study methodology to more accurately represent and contextualize the data through in-depth analysis of the case (Creswell, 2014). This method allows for flexibility in data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), which allowed me to approach the data from multiple perspectives and with multiple interpretative strategies.

This methodological stance is necessary for this study, because excluding the relationships between the teacher/researcher and the students/participants ignores the

dialogue that is foundational for critical pedagogy. These close relationships contributed to a greater sense of trust that allowed participants to engage more in our discussions and to take risks in designing their units.

Positionality Statement

Being the course instructor and researcher, I adopted a participant-observer role for this study. As the instructor, I was immersed in the research setting and had been actively engaging with and working alongside the participants prior to the start of this study and the data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participant-observers require an established rapport with participants so that the participants can "go about their business as usual" (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 41).

Additionally, the research and course readings came from my experiences as a classroom teacher. The texts that I have written about these experiences were included in the course syllabus to facilitate discussion on critical pedagogies' practical applications. This unique perspective helped participants understand how various critical pedagogies work in classrooms, and how to handle potential challenges. As one student said after reading my article (Celaya, 2018), "You practice what you preach." While these experiences and texts contributed to my ethos, it was important to remain cognizant of my role as a teacher-student (Freire, 1970) in this classroom context, and reconsider my ideas alongside my students.

Also, my intersectional identity as a cisgender, heterosexual, bi-racial man, positioned me as both an insider and outsider depending on the topic of conversation. For example, I spoke from an insider's perspective on the lack of representation in traditional

English language arts curriculum. However, I was an outsider when discussing the need for a Queer Literacy Framework (Miller, 2015) in the ELA context. In recognizing my outsider status, I actively worked to make explicit my positionality in dealing with topics outside of my identity. For example, before discussing Miller's (2015) Queer Literacy Framework, I was explicit in my cisgender, heterosexual identity, but I emphasized why I believed discussing LGBTQ+ issues were important in our method's course. To show the importance of LGBTQ+ representation, I shared a message from a former high school student who is a member of the LGBTQ+ community, about what it meant for him to read a book that featured a gay protagonist. In doing so, I made clear that I am not an authority on anyone's experiences, but that I do support everyone in this context where they may or may not have been supported before.

Research Questions

This study explored how pre-service teachers engaged with and applied critical pedagogies when designing civic action units for an English methods course. The readings and course projects were selected and organized to engage in dialogic conversations (Freire, 1974) about these theories and applications. As a participant observer (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I worked alongside the pre-service teachers to understand how these ideas about critical pedagogy influenced our understandings and perspectives about teaching. Their final course project, the Civic Action Unit, was intended to provide insight into their engagement and application of course readings and discussion. It is by no means a summative assessment, as the work of critical pedagogy are ongoing and change depending on unique contexts.

The following questions guide my inquiry into civic action units at the end of a course centered on critical pedagogies which engage in critical consciousness, promote empathy and understanding, and create opportunities for reflective action (praxis) to address social problems. They include the following:

1. What aspects of critical pedagogies influence the design on civic action units?
2. How are critical pedagogies adapted for the specific contexts in which the civic action units are designed?
3. In what ways are critical pedagogies negotiated with other systemic educational forces (i.e. standards, administrators, district policies, parents)?

For the first sub-question, I want to know how the curated course readings influenced the pre-service teachers when they designed their civic action units. Many of the participants had limited experience with their own classrooms and with students, so much of their perceptions about English classroom is based on their experience as students, or through the lenses of their mentor teachers. By answering this question, I want to know how the texts, some of which I first read in graduate school, could be influential with undergraduate pre-service teachers. Ideas and texts that are referenced at the end of the semester, in unit rationales and in follow-up interviews, might have the greatest potential in influencing pre-service teachers.

The second sub-question addresses a key tenant of critical pedagogy. Every teaching context, the students, community, culture, language, history, economics, and more intersectional influences than I can list, shapes that space and is unique within a state, district, and even school site. This reality makes claims of a silver bullet or a best

practice difficult to prove, and similarly difficult to claim one method of critical pedagogy as the best (Alim & Paris, 2017; Smagorinksy, 2009). With this perspective, I want to understand how pre-service teachers take critical pedagogy and adapt the practices and principles to fit their intended contexts and students. At the end of the day, creating a critical pedagogy-oriented instructional unit isn't about what worked elsewhere or in previous years, but what will allow students to engage critically within their own world, to take reflective action for themselves and for others.

With the third sub-question, I recognize that teaching decisions are often influenced by many outside factors, not just personal pedagogy. The innumerable outside influences, such as standards, school policies, administrators, colleagues, parents, community history, and student interests, can impact how a teacher designs a unit to support civic action. With this reality in mind, I wanted to understand how pre-service teachers designed their civic action units with this future challenges and influences in mind. If a pre-service teacher designed a civic action unit that failed to address content standards or operated from a banking model (Freire, 1970), then many of these important factors may have been ignored and may not produce lasting influence or change in one's teaching practice.

Setting

This study took place at a large public research university in the Southwest United States. Demographically, in 2018, the university reported 49% of undergraduate students were white, 24% Hispanic/Latino, 7% Asian, 4% Black/African American, and 1%

American Indian/Alaska Native. The university is largely composed of resident students, which account for 64% of the student body.

The course in which this study took place is a required for the students which they take in the final two semesters before student teaching to become secondary English language arts teachers. Many of the students were enrolled in either the secondary education–English degree program offered by the College of Education or the English education degree program offered by the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The course addresses methods of teaching language, which was historically focused on how to teach grammar. However, in recent years, the course had largely functioned as a general methods of teaching English course. When I took the course as an undergraduate student, the course focused on different methods for teaching reading, writing, grammar, and speaking and listening, but it lacked a clear focus or purpose. In order to address methods broadly, as many students were about to start student teaching, I defined language broadly, borrowing Morrell's (2005) conception that, "language is foundational to all learning…. we are constructed and we construct ourselves through language" (p. 312). With this definition guiding the course design, I created the following course objectives:

Students will:

- understand the importance of praxis and critical consciousness for all students.
- perform research to inform and support their professional knowledge.

- evaluate and critique professional practices to better support student learning, culture, and identity.
- adapt teaching practices to better serve their students based on their context.
- design lessons and units that empower students towards social action.
- apply critical pedagogies when designing and planning for their classrooms.
- critically reflect on what they are learning and how their previous beliefs might be challenged.

These course objectives were influenced by the critical pedagogies students would be engaging with, and the course projects they would be creating. Starting with the objective, "students will understand the importance of praxis and critical consciousness for all students." The course's first reading was from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and established the definition for critical consciousness and praxis that we returned to often during the course.

Participants

All the participants in this study were recruited from my teaching methods course, and their consent forms were sealed until after the semester ended. During the data collection stage, I did not know how many students consented to participate in the study or how many were also willing to participate in a follow-up interview on their own time. As a result, participation was completely voluntary and anonymous and did not affect students' final grades. All the work required for participation in the study was part of the

regular course curriculum, and participation did not require additional work outside the scheduled course time. However, consenting participants, who indicated their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, were met on their own time, but this did not impact their grade for the course.

Since I did not know who had consented to the study at the time, I collected data from every pre-service teacher in the class. After final grades had been submitted, I opened the sealed envelope with the consent forms to find that 20 of the 22 pre-service teachers in course consented to participate in the study, and I removed the data collected from the two pre-service teachers who did not consent to participate. To narrow the scope of study, I decided to select participants who consented to follow-up interviews, for which 14 of the participants consented. From these 14 consenting participants, five were selected for follow-up interviews and further analysis in this study. When selecting the five participants to case study, I evaluated the data using three key criteria: (1) completeness of their civic action unit, (2) the amount of contextual data to draw from in the findings, and (3) demographic representation of the course.

The selected participants' units contained all the required elements as outlined in the assignment sheet and syllabus. These elements include: a submitted proposal, a unit calendar, four key lesson plans, a final assignment sheet, a written unit rationale, and a presentation.

Since most participants submitted complete units, I reviewed the contextual data (my field notes and class recordings) to identify participants that provided more personal data that could be used to understand the design of their civic action unit. All of the

selected participants engaged with me one-on-one to discuss their unit or to talk about their personal experiences outside of class. For example, one participant, Mariela, stayed after class one night for 30 minutes to discuss her topic and to wrestle with the numerous ideas and hopes she had for her unit. Another, Bethany, used her weekly reflections as a space to share with me her personal, academic, and familial struggles that were influencing her work and positionality as a teacher. Data such as these provide excellent insight into the designing of the participants' civic action units as it is bound by time and space (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The third point of consideration when selecting participants to case study was their representation of the course demographics. Of the 20 consenting participants: 17 identified as female and 3 identified as male, 8 identified as white and 12 identified as non-white with "Hispanic" being the most identified ethnicity at 7, 16 identified as straight and 4 identified as bisexual. In the five selected participants there are 4 females and 1 male; 2 white participants, 1 Hispanic participant, 1 Jewish-American participant, and 1 biracial (Navajo and Black) participant; and 4 identified as straight and 1 as bisexual.

In the following pages, I introduce each pre-service teacher and share a little about each one as people, students, and soon-to-be teachers.

Mariela. Never afraid to ask challenging questions, Mariela was respected by her classmates for her thoughtful probing and unashamed passion for social justice and Lin Manuel-Miranda. She was not always this way. In fact, at the start of her undergraduate pre-service teaching program, Mariela intended to be a traditional English teacher. That

started to change during her methods of teaching composition course the previous semester and came to fruition in this course.

Of all the participants, Mariela gravitated to the work of Freire (1970) the most. She recognized that all teaching has political implications from what is left out of curriculum to modeling civil discourse and empathy to students. After discussions about teaching and school policies, which were frequent, Mariela would often return to the question, "Should we share our political beliefs with students?" More so than sharing political leanings, Mariela was challenging the other pre-service teachers to share their humanity with students. To show students that they care about students beyond the academic. According to Mariela, if teachers want students to engage vulnerably with sensitive topics, then they must be willing to share their own positions on such topics.

Mariela used the course projects as opportunities to explore her interests and learn how to connect them to the English classroom. For her first project, Mariela researched and designed educational materials to teach about criminal justice reform, and for project two Mariela chose to read *Dear Martin* (Stone, 2017) to explore how to teach about Black Lives Matter. These were two topics that Mariela was passionate about outside of class, and she has a unique positionality with since her father is a retired police detective.

Kristin. Kristin registered for the course on the first day of class, and I didn't see her again for a month due to a medical emergency. In most cases, this student would be written off or encouraged to try again next semester. However, Kristin worked hard to stay connected with the class through her peers and in our course's "Hallway Conversations" discussion board where she was able to share her questions, insights, and

challenges for the course readings with the class. At the end of the semester, she thanked me for working with her and not giving up on her, because the course had been so meaningful for her.

Early in the semester, through her discussion board posts, it was clear that Kristin had a strong desire to be a social justice-oriented teacher. Like Mariela, she took to the early readings by Freire (1970) and Alim and Paris (2017). For her first project, she researched how to teach about white privilege in and English classroom. As a former sociology major, addressing this oppressive systemic force was important for Kristin, especially since she was interning and would soon be student teaching at her local high school where she had graduated from not too long ago.

Kristin was passionate about being in her internship classroom. While the requirement is to go to the internship class once a week, Kristin would go three times a week. Since she would be student teaching with the same teacher, Kristin wanted to be a part of the classroom community as much as possible. However, toward the end of the semester, she shared about a recent experience where she and her mentor teacher were facing significant resistance from their students. We stayed after class one day and talked for 30 minutes sharing stories and ideas about how to improve their situation. Thankfully, by the end of the course, she shared a success story with one student that inspired and encouraged her to continue on.

Bethany. My relationship with Bethany started off on a bad foot. Despite my best intentions, I othered Bethany on the first day of class during our introductions, by asking her a follow-up question about what her favorite Indigenous novel. A misstep she made

me aware of immediately, and that I apologized for. Throughout the semester, I was unsure of her perspective of the class. However, around the start of the civic action unit project, Bethany opened up in her weekly reflections about the personal struggles she was having outside of class. For the following three weeks, we had a back and forth conversation in the weekly reflections about finding support and how to take care of one's self.

Early in the semester, Bethany would physically separate herself from her peers. She would often sit in the wheelchair-accessible table on the side of the classroom, have her headphones on before class when everyone else would mingle, and be the first one to leave class. However, after she started getting some support outside of class, she began sitting with a handful of classmates, talking to her peers, and engaging during class discussions. I would see her face light up during moments of agreeance, and express shock to comments that ran against her beliefs about students or teaching.

Despite the slow acclimation to the classroom culture, Bethany always knew how to establish her presence in the class. During her project one presentation, Bethany worked the "teaching stage" better than anyone else. She was commanding, assertive, and confident in what she had to say that she did not need to refer to her slides, unlike most of her peers. In her final presentation, when she shared her civic action unit with the class, she took time out of her limited five minutes to introduce herself in Navajo, sharing with her peers a part of her life they were unaware of before.

Catherine. Prior to joining the undergraduate secondary education program, Catherine was a broadcast journalism major. During her senior year, she was challenged

to work the beats following some of the big social issues at the time. She interviewed Standing Rock protesters and people protesting the Trump administration's child separation policy. Before coming face-to-face with these people, Catherine shared many of the same politically conservative beliefs as her parents. These experiences radically changed her worldview and motivated her to switch her major to secondary education.

At the beginning of the course, Catherine was energized by the course readings and discussion. A month into the class, I started to worry that the focus on critical pedagogies had swung too far into the theoretical and that I was losing students' interest. After one class, I walked and talked with Catherine and another student, and I asked, "How is the course going so far? Is everything making sense?" Perhaps the first time either had a professor who expressed their vulnerable and insecurities about the course design. Both Catherine and the other student reassured me that the course was indeed making sense and that it had been their favorite class that semester.

Throughout the semester, Catherine actively contributed to class discussions and expressed her intention of being a social justice-oriented teacher. However, her desire to support student agency and listen to students interests frequently conflicted with her "perfectionist" mentality, one that many pre-service teachers have. Catherine became so overwhelmed by trying to plan for *all* the possibilities she might encounter with such a student activism focus that she began to question whether not teaching was the right career choice for her at the start of the civic action unit project.

David. Out of the five selected participants, David represents the small group of students in class who were still a year away from starting their student teaching

experience. David also triggered many of my high school teacher reflexes early in the semester. In our first class he asked if his girlfriend could sit in class, since he was her ride home that day. A request that I initially wanted to reject, but in trying to maintain a humanizing approach to my students, I allowed it. Similarly, I had to fight my knee jerk reactions to ask him to take out the headphone out of his ear during class.

As the course progressed, so did David's contributions to the class. Being a year behind most of his classmates, David did not have an established rapport with others like many of his classmates. However, David earned the respect of many of his classmates during his panel presentation for project one. He shared two educational resources for teaching poetry that many students referenced in their weekly reflections. This trend continued, and by the end of the year, several students pointed to David as a major influence in their thinking and growth over the semester.

David is a passionate and outspoken person. He would often update me on the status of his Twitter account as to whether or not it was banned during the weeks the class participated in the #NCTEchat on Twitter each month. Throughout the course, David relished discussions of educational theory. He would often ask questions that pushed our conversations into challenge spaces, especially when his peers were primarily concerned with the "how" of the theory. However, in his exit interview, David cited the course's emphasis on doing, pushing the theory into action, as his favorite takeaway.

Course Design

In this section, I will explain the rationale for both the course readings (these can be found in Appendix A in the course calendar), and course projects (the syllabus

descriptions of these projects can be found in Appendix B). While the third and final project, the Civic Action Unit, is the focus of this study, the preceding course materials and projects are important for understanding the semester long process the participants were engaged with. One research question seeks to understand how the participants engaged with and applied critical pedagogies when designing their civic action unit, and to answer that question it is imperative to know the texts participants read, and how their experience with early course projects influenced their own unit designs.

Readings. The readings selected for this course fall within two conceptual categories: consciousness-raising, and practical application. In this section, I will explain the rationale behind the two categories, as well as describe the texts that fall within these categories.

Consciousness-raising texts are, "mediating tools to aid the joint development of new ideas, questions, and forms of acting in the world" (Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2017, p.157). By reading and discussing complex, consciousness-raising texts, the students and the teacher make sense of various critical pedagogies and discuss their implications in English classrooms. These consciousness-raising texts also promote the dialogical process in which everyone is responsible for learning and growing. In doing so, rather than recreating a "banking model" of education where the teacher must give the students information to memorize, the teacher and students will engage in problem-posing education (Freire, 1970).

To begin the semester, students read chapter two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970). This text is foundational for many of the ideas that were explored in the

course. It was important to start the semester thinking about critical consciousness, praxis, and the banking model of education, because the following texts work to further these ideas. From this foundation, students read "What is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Why Does It Matter?" (Alim & Paris, 2017). This text explores the different aspects of culturally sustaining pedagogy, and helped students to examine curriculum, pedagogy, and culture from a critical perspective. Next, students read "Critical English Education" (Morrell, 2005), and discussed what role students play as both consumers and producers of critical texts. Students were also asked to read Miller's "A Queer Literacy Framework Promoting (A)Gender and (A)Sexuality Self-Determinations and Justice" (2015) to expand our understanding of critical pedagogies to include the perspectives and experiences of LGBTQ+ students. Moving into asset pedagogy, students read the seminal text, "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms" (Moll et al., 1992) to begin thinking about the different funds of knowledge students bring to class, and how those can be used to promote literacy. In order to bridge the theoretical with the practical, we read "Acquiescence, Accommodation, and Resistance in Learning to Teach Within a Prescribed Curriculum" (Smagorinsky, 2002) to look at the critical responsibilities of teachers for their students. This also provided a framework for how pre-service teachers can being adapting and applying critical pedagogies in school settings which may not be receptive to change.

The practical application category was intended to provide examples *of what could be*, not to be a collection of "best practices" or pedagogical band-aids. These texts gave students examples of how others have taken up various critical pedagogies in their

specific contexts. Some of these texts come from practitioner journals and others are more researcher oriented. Despite the differences in audience, the texts still served the purpose of seeing theory in practice in different contexts. By giving students practical application texts, they can learn about various pedagogical methods within different sociocultural settings and imagine how critical pedagogies might look in their future classrooms. These texts comprised a bulk of the course readings, since most pre-service teachers have limited experience with classrooms and students as teachers.

The main textbook for the course was *Pose, Wobble, Flow: A Culturally Proactive Approach to Literacy Instruction* by Antero Garcia and Cindy O'Donnell-Allen (2015). This book pulls from the author's experiences as classroom teachers to ground their culturally proactive approach. Many of the pre-service teachers enjoyed reading *Pose, Wobble, Flow* and found the examples and provocation relevant in preparing to be a teacher. Additionally, students read other texts grounded in classroom experiences for changing pedagogical methods, such as "Embracing Change: Teaching in a Multicultural World" (hooks, 1994) and "Is It Time to Abandon the Idea of 'Best Practices' in the Teaching of English?" (Smagorinsky, 2009). To contextualize asset pedagogy, students read about how Latinx students can influence curriculum content in "'For Us, By Us': A Vision for Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies Forwarded by Latinx Youth" (Irizarry, 2017). Next, to discuss critical approaches to writing instruction, students read about using youth spoken word poetry (Celaya, 2019) in bring various identities and perspectives into the classroom. As we looked at how critical pedagogies can inform literature instruction, students read about the impact of having students' culture

represented in the curriculum can have on student success in "'This Stuff Interests Me': Re-Centering Indigenous Paradigms in Colonizing Schooling Spaces" (San Pedro, 2017). Then, while students participated in their young adult book groups for their second project, they read about how young adult literature can be used to not only improve reading skills, but to develop better people (Ivey, 2017). During this research study, as students worked on developing their civic action units, they read about how three teachers incorporated various elements of youth participatory action research (YPAR) in their classrooms (Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015), and about how schools can support student agency in and out of the classroom (Celaya, 2018). Finally, to end the course, students read "A Call for Healing Teachers" (Garcia, 2019) to facilitate discussion on how teachers, while caring for their student during times of trauma, grief, and healing, must also work to care for themselves and their colleagues.

Projects. The projects for this course were designed to support the raising of students' critical consciousness and promote praxis. With each project, students took into consideration the course readings, discussions, and their own experiences to design relevant materials and share their knowledge with their peers. As an instructor, I also designed the projects to serve as models for what critical pedagogy can look like in practice. Each project allowed for various degrees of student choice. Each project emphasized the creation of real-world teaching products that would be useful in their future classrooms. And each project encouraged the pre-service teachers to share their knowledge and work with their peers through in real-world genres and mediums.

Project one: Exploring professional organizations. This project asked students to use the resources of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to research a topic that they are interested in learning more about. Students were encouraged to choose topics they felt strongly about or felt they needed to learn more about before entering the classroom. I showed students how to access the NCTE journals using the university library website, which gave them access to articles through the library's subscription. I encouraged pre-service teachers interested in teaching high school to find articles in *English Journal* and for teachers interested in teaching middle school to look through *Voices from the Middle.* While, students were allowed to use other NCTE resources like other journals or position statements, I wanted them to experience and become familiar with the practitioner resources that would be most helpful when they became classroom teachers.

After exploring the different resources from NCTE, students produced three educational materials that were supported by research. There was no set list of specific educational materials I required from each student. Education materials could have been, lesson plans, assignment sheets, classroom posters, a letter to parents, a written rationale for an administrator, a detailed description of classroom policies, an annotated bibliography of classroom texts. The possibilities were endless. My one guiding rule was that the materials needed to be ready to use in a class or school.

Students then shared their findings and educational materials with their in a panel presentation format. To facilitate this, I grouped students together into panel groups based on their researched topics. Some of the panel groups covered themes such as teaching

poetry, using young adult literature, creative writing, and mental health in the ELA classroom. Then, for the next three weeks, at the start of each class, a panel presentation group shared their research findings and materials with the class. At the end of each panel, the presenters fielded questions and comments from their peers in the audience.

Project two: Young adult literature book group. For project two, I selected six contemporary young adult literature (YAL) novels for students to read in book groups together (see figure 2). The novels were selected to provide students with examples of quality YAL that represented a diverse range of cultures, identities, and social issues.

Figure 2. List of YAL Book Group Novels

Novel	Author(s)	Primary Social Issue(s)
The Music of What Happens (2019)	Bill Konigsberg	Toxic Masculinity, Sexual assault
The Inexplicable Logic of My Life (2017)	Benjamin Alire Sáenz	Identity Conflict
Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass (2013)	Meg Medina	Bullying
Internment (2019)	Samira Ahmed	Xenophobia, Islamophobia
Dry (2018)	Neal Shusterman, Jarrod Shusterman	Climate Change
Dear Martin (2017)	Nic Stone	Black Lives Matter

The pre-service teachers submitted a Google Form ranking each novel from 1 to 5. Five being the novel they were most interested in reading, and one being the novel they were least interested in reading. Every student was placed in either their first or second choice. Each novel was broken down into three sections, and students read each section prior to class for the next two weeks. After each reading section, students participated in

discussion groups on their book. I allowed students to freely discuss the novels, but I asked them to be conscious of *how* they talked about the novel. The pre-service teachers were free to talk about the books just like their students would: what did they like, which characters annoyed them, how they related to the story. However, they also needed to discuss the novels as teachers: what themes could they teach, what activities could the design, what supplemental texts would pair well with the novel. This latter point of emphasis was important to remember since their project asked them to design relevant teaching materials for the book.

Each book group prepared a brief presentation in which they summarized the novel and shared why they thought the novel should be taught in their peers' future classrooms. Then, each group member presented and explained the teaching resource they designed for the novel. Every group was asked to compile their teaching resources in a Google Drive folder or on an accessible website, such as Weebly.com, and share their folder or website with the rest of the class in a discussion board. This encouraged students to not only produce quality materials for their peers, but to collected quality resources from their peers for their future use.

Project three: Civic action unit. The culminating final project in the course is the designing of a civic action unit, the focus of this study. After reading and discussing critical pedagogies, conducting educational research, and designing relevant materials for the ELA classroom, students read chapter 3 from Pose, Wobble, Flow which argues that literacy educators have a responsibility to teach toward civic action. In the previous semester, I assigned the civic action unit in the middle of the semester, but it did not

produce the results I had expected. Now, with the course being grounded in various critical pedagogies that emphasize student action, saving the civic action unit until the end of the semester made the most sense.

Pre-service teachers were asked to choose a topic that they thought would be of interest to their future students. Then, they conducted research, referred to previous course texts, and collaborated with their peers to design their civic action unit. Some students conducted primary research with the students in their internship schools to better understand what social topics they were interested in. Several students struggled to formulate a focus for their civic action, but often the struggle came from a desire to design a unit that went beyond the traditional conception of a "civic unit." The pre-service teachers wanted their students to take meaningful action but did not want to limit or stop at writing a letter to a senator or writing a research paper. These were productive struggles. I would often encourage my students to embrace the struggle they were feeling, stating, "if it were easy, then every teacher would be doing it."

The parameters for this project were broad, and students given the freedom to design units on a variety of topics using a range of methods over a multitude of timeframes. Many students designed units to last from three to six weeks, others designed units to take place throughout the course of the year with a few weeks a quarter would be dedicated to the civic action unit. For the assignment, students were required to submit a written rationale, a unit calendar, four key lesson plans, and an assignment sheet for the final assessment. Then, they presented their unit to their peers and provided an accessible Google Drive folder or website link for them to access and download their materials.

Data Collection

This study drew from five sets of data to understand the case study participants and their experience engaging with and applying critical pedagogies to design civic action units. These data include: a demographic survey (Appendix C), researcher field notes, class recordings, weekly reflective journals, final civic action unit submissions, and follow-up interviews. In this section, I will provide a description of each data source collected for this study.

Survey. At the end of class on October 24th, 2019, I provided students with the participant consent forms for the study and on the back of each form was the demographic survey. This survey asked for various demographic details about the participant including their age, gender identity, preferred pronouns, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and where they grew up. These details were used to better understand the demographic make-up of the course and study participants. In addition to highlighting the unique sociocultural context in which this study takes place, the demographic details provide insight into the participants' knowledge and experience that influence their teaching practices.

Field Notes. While I took brief notes during class discussion or during breaks in the class flow, most of my field notes were composed immediately after class. These field notes were audio recorded on my cellphone to allow for a generative stream of notes and ideas, as opposed to writing my field notes and falling into the temptation to self-edit or excluding thoughts. This also provided, "insight into the roles, contexts, and realities of the research setting and people within it over time" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p.161). These

recordings were opportunities for me, as a researcher and the instructor, to process through the events and experiences in that day's class in the moment, as opposed to relying on memory (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Class Recordings. In addition to recording my field notes, I also recorded the classroom discussions and activities. Since I did not know who had consented to participate in the study, these recordings were used to provide contextual reference for how the class engaged with the readings and in collaboration for their civic action units. The biggest piece of contextual data from the recordings came from the individual conversations I had with students after class. Throughout the study, students made time to stay after class and talk to me about their personal challenges in navigating their teaching identity in relation to the course, and the challenges they were experience with designing their civic action units. These impromptu discussions and idea exchanges provided valuable insight into the pre-service teachers' process of design and the various negotiations and adaptions they needed to make in their civic action units.

Weekly Reflections. Throughout the course, students were invited to actively reflect on how the course content and discussions were influencing, shaping, and challenging their experiences and ideas about teaching. For each weekly reflection, students were asked to write around 300 words, and explore 1-2 key points of reflection for that week. Weekly reflections were opportunities for me, their instructor, to understand how our course is working in their minds. They were not summaries of what we did in class or summaries of the articles we read. Many students used the weekly reflections to ask big questions about the state of education or to question their roles as

teachers. Others used the weekly reflections as a space to express their insecurities, fears, and frustrations about teaching. I would not respond to every reflection. However, there were reflections each week that prompted me to respond with either a resource, a word of encouragement, or a compliment. For this study, these weekly reflections provided insight into how students progressed and engaged with the readings from the beginning of the study to the end of the course and in their follow-up interviews.

Final Civic Action Units. The main artifact in this study was the participant's submitted civic action unit. Students submitted their civic action units online to our course Canvas page. These submissions included a written rationale for the unit, a unit calendar, four key lesson plans, and the final assignment sheet. Their unit proposals and presentations were submitted separately. There were not templates or formats required for the different components. Students were encouraged to design materials that would be useful immediately to them.

This was especially freeing when it came to the structure of their lesson plans. In previous education courses, the pre-service teachers had been asked to write extensive and very detailed lesson plans that were overwhelming and time consuming. While we discussed the reasoning for such an exhaustive lesson plan template for novice lesson plan writers, I shared with the class two samples lesson plans that I wrote early in my career. I used these models to show students how my method for lesson planning had changed over my career, and how I used my lesson plans to address district and personal initiatives. From these examples, I encouraged students to design their own templates for

their lesson plans. Templates that would allow them to effectively and efficiently design and organize their daily work.

Follow-up Interviews. Once the participants were selected, I scheduled times to meet with each interviewee at a local coffee shop to conduct follow-up interviews. Most of the participants wanted to meet the weekend before their student teaching started, as they would be too busy once it started. David, the only non-student teaching participant, opted to meet during the first week of classes near campus. Each follow-up interview lasted between 60-75 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. Each interview followed a semi-structured format (Roulston, 2010), and the following questions were sent to each participant ahead of our scheduled interview:

1. What influenced your Civic Action Unit topic or theme?
2. What do you love about your unit?
3. Is there anything you would change about your unit?
4. What course readings or activities helped you to design your Civic Action Unit?
5. Why do you think your Civic Action Unit is important for you and other teachers?
6. What do you think are the long-term influences of your civic action unit and this course for you as a teacher?

Additional questions were asked during the follow-up interviews that arose in response to the participant's answers to the above questions.

Along with the researcher generated questions, I also invited participants to ask me questions at the end of their interview. This was done to create a reciprocal relationship between myself and the participants, a relationship that has historically being omnidirectional and self-serving for the researcher.

Data Analysis

The weekly reflections, final civic action units, and follow-up interviews were collected and transcribed for data analysis. The field notes, memos, and recorded class discussions were referenced for contextual details to support the analysis and reporting of the findings.

The research questions for this study seek to understand how pre-service teachers engage with critical pedagogies, adapt critical pedagogies, and negotiate systemic forces in their unit design. These different points of focus require more than one method of first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016) to understand the ways the data answer these questions. For my analysis, I coded the data from the selected participants using three different methods of first-cycle coding. As Saldaña notes, these different methods are not discrete and may overlap at times.

Below, I will describe each method and provide an example of my coding for the same section of my follow-up interview with Mariela. In this excerpt, Mariela is responding to the follow-up interview question, "Why do you think your Civic Action Unit is important for you and other teachers?" In her response, Mariela addresses her frustration with her peers in our methods course.

I first coded the data using initial coding (Charmaz, 2014), which served as an opportunity "to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances" of the data (Saldaña, 2016, p.115). These codes represent my initial understanding and interpretation of the data. In figure 3, I highlight the phrases from a moment during my follow-up interview with Mariela and provide my initial code to the right of the interview except.

Figure 3. Initial Coding Example

Data Excerpt	Initial Coding
Mariela: And I think also for colleagues, I got frustrated sometimes in our class because like people would be like, "Well, that's against policy, isn't it?" I was like, ugh!	Frustrated with class discussion Fear of breaking school policies
A: Yeah.	
Mariela: Just because it's against policy doesn't make it wrong, you know?	Redefining wrong and right
A: Right.	
Mariela: And it's like important that we consistently check ourselves and say like, "Okay. It says that you can't do this in the policy. Why? Is there a legitimate reason? Is this reason something that's actually helping people or is this something that's actually hurting people?" And it's worth teaching that to our students and we have more eyes, you know. They can catch it too and be like, "Well, why do you have this policy?" "Why does it matter?" And then, we're checking ourselves honestly like too. I mean, like, "What are my thoughts on this?" "Are those like beneficial to us or are they actually detrimental?" And then, for me, it's important because that's why I love teaching. So, like if I don't do that then I don't think I'm going to love it anymore, you know.	Need for teacher reflection Policies can hurt students Students can critique harmful policies Need for personal reflection Sense of purpose in teaching

As mentioned previously, this method of coding allowed me to become familiar with what is in the data, and in doing so, it provided a whole picture understanding of each participants work. This provided important context for the next two methods of coding.

To understand how the pre-service teachers engaged and adapted critical pedagogies, I coded for the values (beliefs, attitudes, values) represented in the data. Values coding can be difficult since, "what a participant states are his or her values,

attitudes, and beliefs may not always be truthful or harmonize with his or her observed actions and interactions" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 132). However, to understand the adaption of critical pedagogies for specific contexts, the disconnect, or lack of harmony, between the stated value and what is observed in action (the civic action unit design) can provide insight on how the pre-service teacher attempts to contend with their values and pedagogical beliefs or how those values negotiate the systemic forces of education. In figure 4, I show the values codes for the same follow-up interview.

Figure 4. Values Coding Example

Data	Coding
Mariela: And I think also for colleagues, I got frustrated sometimes in our class because like people would be like, "Well, that's against policy, isn't it?" I was like, ugh!	Reject conforming to policies
A: Yeah.	
Mariela: Just because it's against policy doesn't make it wrong, you know?	Policies are not inherently moral or ethical
A: Right.	
Mariela: And it's like important that we consistently check ourselves and say like, "Okay. It says that you can't do this in the policy. Why? Is there a legitimate reason? Is this reason something that's actually helping people or is this something that's actually hurting people?" And it's worth teaching that to our students and we have more eyes, you know. They can catch it too and be like, "Well, why do you have this policy?" "Why does it matter?" And then, we're checking ourselves honestly like too. I mean, like, "What are my thoughts on this?" "Are those like beneficial to us or are they actually detrimental?" And then, for me, it's important because that's why I love teaching. So, like if I don't do that then I don't think I'm going to love it anymore, you know.	Value in self-critique Policies can help as well as hurt people Students can be agents for themselves Teachers should be open to critique Education's power to challenge inequities

In this excerpt, the participant's beliefs about the power of student and teacher agency are contextualized with a common systemic educational force, school policy. Although still stated, there is harmony between the expressed value, students can be agents for themselves, and how that can be implemented. It is common for teachers to express their desire for students to have agency, but it is often coupled with a reluctance to critique school and district policies, such as dress code and punitive punishments.

The third method of coding used was concept coding. According to Saldaña (2016), "a concept is a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a suggested meaning broader than a single item or action – a "bigger picture" beyond the tangible apparent" (p.119). This method was used to assign codes that represented the multiple voices and ideas that exist in the field of critical pedagogy and that were represented in the course readings. In figure 5, are examples of the concept codes for the same interview excerpt.

Figure 5. Concept Coding Example

Data	Coding
Mariela: And I think also for colleagues, I got frustrated sometimes in our class because like people would be like, "Well, that's against policy, isn't it?" I was like, ugh! A: Yeah. Mariela: Just because it's against policy doesn't make it wrong, you know? A: Right. Mariela: And it's like important that we consistently check ourselves and say like, "Okay. It says that you can't do this in the policy. Why? Is there a legitimate reason? Is this reason something that's actually helping people or is this something that's actually hurting people?" And it's worth teaching that to our students and we	**CSP**: Loving critiques of regressive practices **Critical Consciousness**: Identifying systemic oppression **YPAR**: Students as action researchers

	have more eyes, you know. They can catch it too and be like, "Well, why do you have this policy?" "Why does it matter?" And then, we're checking ourselves honestly like too. I mean, like, "What are my thoughts on this?" "Are those like beneficial to us or are they actually detrimental?" And then, for me, it's important because that's why I love teaching. So, like if I don't do that then I don't think I'm going to love it anymore, you know.	**Praxis**: Students reflecting and acting **Teaching as a political act**: There is no neutral stance **Banking Model**: Teaching is more than making "deposits"

While many of these concepts pull from the same theoretical background, I have coded each concept to represent its unique contribution to the field and to our class discussions. For example, while YPAR is a conceptualization of Freire's (1970) ideas about critical consciousness and praxis, its application for student driven research and action, was an important concept within our class discussions as students began designing their civic action units. Several students explicitly cited the YPAR article (Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015) they read for class as an influence for their civic action unit design.

After coding with these three methods of first-cycle coding, I categorized the most frequent and significant codes "to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 240). This method of second-cycle coding helped me to assess the comparability and transferability of the codes across the five participant's data (Saldaña, 2016). This process of categorizing was done within a CAQDAS program in which the codes could be categorized and recategorized more easily. Below, in figure 6, is an example category and the codes from the participants' data that represent the category name.

Figure 6. Code Category Example

Category	Influence of Course Experience
Codes	Connecting idea to a classroom context Reference to an assigned course text Referencing another student's work Vulnerable teaching Influence of an early course project or activity Reference to a conversation with the instructor Reference to a class discussion Listening to student interests Instructor modeling

For the above example, "Influence of Course Experience," I grouped codes that directly referenced aspects of the course experience that were mentioned in the data. While reference to the course emerged throughout the data set, this category identifies the specific codes, and the influences they represent, that were most salient

From these categories, I mapped connections between the categories and the research questions, and selected representative quotes, interpretations, and interactions. With these representative data, I report on the study's findings, which can be found in the next chapter, Findings.

Validity

In order to bolster the study's validity, I triangulated the data sources and data analysis. First, by collecting data from various sources, I examined evidence from the sources and use them "to build a coherent justification for the themes" (Creswell, 2014). This not only allowed me to verify and support codes from multiple points of data collection, but it provided the necessary data to present a credible and descriptive case

study (Stake, 2005). Along with triangulating data sources, I also employed analytic data triangulation, which involves examining data sources collected at different times and places (Denzin, 2009). Ravitch and Carl (2016) have extended this idea to mean, "that as you analyze your data, you do so through an approach that explores and integrates across the various data sources to help round out and challenge your understanding of the participants and their perspectives experiences as individuals within groups and subgroups, and in relation to the data sources themselves" (p. 227).

Limitations

As with any teaching context, the site of this study was unique and specific and may not be representative of other contexts or realities. The participants in this study were more diverse than the national averages for teacher education programs, and they intern and work within school systems that are traditionally conservative and resistant to progressive changes. These experiences and influences shaped their understanding of the world and teaching in ways that others may not have to consider. The participants also had limited experience in classrooms and schools as teachers. Their civic action units were designed for imagined classrooms, whereas a teacher with a specific set of students can address real student needs, cultures, and identities through their curriculum design. Also, the participants designed their civic action units in a course grounded in critical pedagogy, so they were encouraged to apply critical pedagogies to their imagined contexts. Whereas teachers, who must navigate the various institutional structures of schooling, may be encounter more challenges when looking to implement critical pedagogies in their classrooms.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

> What is this teaching them about other people, about other human experiences, and about empathy? I think that those are so much more lifelong, sustaining, and so much more important in the long-term than whether or not they're going to remember the major themes in *Macbeth*. –Catherine
>
> It's hard to teach something you don't know. –Mariela

In early January, I sent out e-mails to my five selected participants asking if they were still willing to participate in a follow-up interview. One-by-one they responded, and we scheduled dates, times, and locations to meet. Four out of the five were about to begin their student teaching experience as soon as school started, and so we planned to meet during the last few days of their winter break. David, who wouldn't be starting student teaching for another year, agreed to meet closer to the start of the university's semester, when he'd be on campus buying books.

As I met with each participant, before we started with the interview questions, our conversations immediately went to their student teaching assignments. Bethany was excited to be at a large public high school in a very diverse convergence of neighborhoods representing various economic, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. Kristin was returning to her previous mentor teacher's classroom with whom she had an established rapport, but her relationship with the students made her nervous. Eager to get started, Catherine went in before the official start date to plan alongside her mentor teacher and to get to know her students from their first day. While all of them worried about the new responsibilities, managing large amounts of students, and working every

day for no pay, Mariela worried about potential conflict with her newfound passion for student advocacy. Although she had worked with him in the past and respected him as a teacher, she candidly shared, “Honestly, I’m super nervous about student teaching, because my mentor does not have these ideas. He is very, very old school.”

In this study, pre-service teachers engaged with and applied critical pedagogies to design civic action units at the end of a semester long course prior to starting their student teaching experience. Never before in their undergraduate teacher preparation program had any of the participants been asked to design a unit centered around civic action or social justice. Much of their preparation focused on traditional approaches to teaching English or “old school” as Mariela described it. Designing activities for canonical texts and developing grammar lessons were common experiences in their other education classes. However, designing for civic action was a new experience for each of them as teachers and as students. In this chapter, I share my findings for how critical pedagogies that engage in critical consciousness, promote empathy and understanding, and create opportunities for reflective action (praxis) to address social problems, inform pre-service teachers’ civic action units. My findings answer the following research questions:

- What aspects of critical pedagogies influence the design of civic action units?
- How are critical pedagogies adapted for the specific contexts in which the civic action units are designed?

- In what ways are critical pedagogies negotiated with other systemic educational forces (i.e. standards, administrators, district policies, parents)?

In the following pages, I share my findings to answer the above questions. During my time working and learning alongside Mariela, David, Catherine, Bethany, and Kristin, during our English methods course, I learned more about myself, my teaching, and why this work matters right now. Their willingness to be vulnerable, to take risks, and to challenge their ideas about teaching provided great insight into the process of becoming a more critical pedagogue.

Designing with Theory

In this section, I explore findings that address the question: What aspects of critical pedagogies influence the design of civic action units? I describe how some of the critical pedagogies read for and discussed in class contributed to the pre-service teachers experience of designing with theory for their civic action units. While the readings and discussions all contributed to the knowledge and growth of each of the participants, there were some that were explicitly named or present in their units. For example, references and conversations about critical consciousness and praxis (Freire, 1970) were present in multiple assigned readings (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; Morrell, 2005; hooks, 1994), but instead of using different terms like culturally proactive teaching (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen) or critical English education (Morrell, 2005), the participants mostly used the terms critical consciousness or praxis.

Critical Consciousness and Praxis

Mariela's final presentation reminded the class of Freire's influence on our course and on their civic action units. Even though it had been fifteen weeks since we read about the banking system, problem posing education, and critical consciousness and praxis (Freire, 1970), these foundational ideas had been woven throughout the course readings, discussions, and projects. So much so that in our follow-up interviews, a month after the course had ended, the participants were able to talk about Freire's ideas, but had difficulty recalling where those ideas came from.

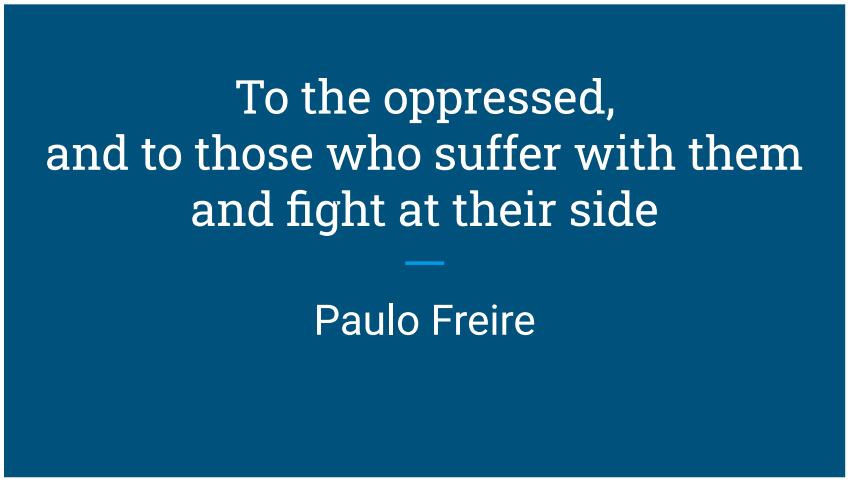
On our last night of class, Mariela reviewed her presentation notes while her friends gave her a hard time about never finishing a presentation within the time limit. Mariela usually has a lot to say. During her panel presentation at the beginning of the year on teaching about criminal justice reform, she had to rush through her slides and still cut into other people's allotted time. I learned my lesson and started enforcing hard end times. I assumed my position in the back corner of the classroom and started my timer for each presenter as they came up.

Soon it was Mariela's turn. As the bright red, blue, and yellow thank you notes fluttered down the rows to the previous presenter, Mariela stood at the front with her arms holding her notebook close to her chest. Although we all expected a mad dash, she took her time to read a quote to start her presentation (see figure 7).

While this was the only direct reference to Freire in the presentations, his ideas were woven throughout the units and ideas shared during the classes' final presentations. After Mariela read the quote, she explained that the quote was a reminder that when we

do this work, we stand with the oppressed, not in front of them. In Mariela's project, "The Ally Project", she wanted to help students, "determine an issue outside of themselves that they wish to address and tak[e] concrete steps towards accomplishing it."

Figure 7. Mariela Dedication Slide



At the beginning of this project, Mariela had struggled with how to create a civic action unit that would allow for students to explore their own passions, without her ideas or beliefs "being pushed onto students." During our discussion on how to backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) for civic action, Mariela shared her initial idea which focused on issues of immigration, specifically Trump administration policies like family separation and the children being kept in cages. A politically charged topic that would be difficult to teach without being accused of indoctrinating students, a common fear among the pre-service teachers. Others nodded their head in agreement, how can you take a charged topic like immigration and teach it without overpowering other's ideas. We brainstormed as a class, while I tracked ideas on the white board, what were some connections that could be made to immigration that opened up the conversation to be more open to interpretation and action. We talked about DREAMers, about asylum

seekers, about opportunities, about safety, and eventually we landed at the American Dream, a common themed talked about in schools, but one that could be extended to immigration.

While the process of widening a scope was helpful to some students, it wasn't for Mariela. After class, she and I talked at length about what she *really* wanted to do with her civic action unit. Although she understood the connection between the American Dream and immigration, she didn't want to design a unit that would be "business as usual" for her students. She wanted to raise students' critical consciousness in a way that she had experienced years ago in her "Persuasive Writing on Public Issues" class. In that class, she learned about police brutality for the first time and became "obsessed" with learning more about things like #BlackLivesMatter, criminal justice reform, and understanding white privilege.

Once she had been exposed to these realities in her previous writing class, she could no longer ignore them. This was evident in her work in the class. For her first project, Mariela researched teaching criminal justice reform using prison literature to share the stories of incarcerated people. Then for her second project, she chose to read *Dear Martin* (Stone, 2017) a book about police brutality. Building on her passions and her previous course projects, which raised her critical consciousness and encouraged praxis, Mariela wanted to design a civic action unit that created opportunities for students to have a similar experience. In her civic action unit, she used her passion for #BlackLivesMatter to teach students how to be allies in social movements, using her experience with #BlackLivesMatter being half-Puerto Rican, half-white as a model.

To help raise students' critical consciousness about their own topics, Mariela asked students to research their topics, specifically looking for texts that provide "background/context of the issue," "activism associated with the issue," and "counteractivism associated with the issue." In asking students to research the background and context of an issue, Mariela is creating opportunity for students to find information and data about why the issue exists. This is the type of empirical evidence that is essential for raising critical consciousness. Without empirical evidence–observable experiences, statistics–the issue remains as a magical or naïve consciousness (Freire, 1974). When in these two alternate states of consciousness, people may fatalistically point to divine influence or claim there's nothing that can be done to change the problem.

Next, Mariela asked students to research activism already associated with the issue. In doing so, she encourages students to reflect critically on the issue to find where they may be able to take action. Instead of defaulting to a traditional approach to student activism (letter to a senator, informational brochure, etc.), students are being asked to explore how others are taking action. This encourages students to look beyond the classroom, school setting, gradebook, and imagine what they could do in the world.

Pushing students further, Mariela also asked students to research counter-activism for their topics. Drawing from her experiences with #BlackLivesMatter, Mariela is aware that no civic action goes unchallenged. Counter-activism efforts like All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter, work to uphold oppressive systems and maintain the status quo of power that creates these oppressive systems. Mariela's unit design recognized the reality

that before joining a social activism movement, students must be aware of how other people may work against them.

Mariela wasn't the only participant who drew from their own personal experiences with social activism to design a civic action unit that raised critical consciousness and engaged in praxis. Prior to becoming a teaching major, Catherine was about to graduate with a degree in broadcast journalism. During her senior year, Catherine was assigned to cover various news stories including immigration and the Standing Rock protests. Catherine shared in her follow-up interview that when she was face-to-face with the people at the heart of these stories, she could not look away or continue to see the world the same way. Similarly, to how hooks (1994) describes the challenges faced by her students, once Catherine became critically conscious of these issues, she started to realize that she no longer saw eye-to-eye with her family and their conservative beliefs. She switched majors, because she believed that to have an impact on the world she would need to be in a classroom, not behind a news desk.

Through the course, Catherine was able connect her experience of becoming more critically conscious to what she had hoped to do as a teacher. Catherine designed her civic action to get students out into the community and face-to-face with some of the people that are being impacted by the civic action issue they selected to research. For the final assignment in her civic action unit, Catherine outlines four steps: Research of Issue, Field Interviews and Op-Ed, Proposal and Plan of Action, and Panel Presentation and Glogster page.

In addition to researching their selected topic, Catherine asks students to find images that represent the issue such as photographs or symbols, digital and media sources such as movies, TV shows, music, and books, and news media sources. By asking students to find information about their topic in the text's students consume on a daily basis, Catherine was working to raise students' critical consciousness about their various issues within their everyday texts. Instead of limiting students to "academic texts," she is showing students they can be critical consumers and producers of texts (Morrell, 2005) that they are already familiar with.

After conducting research, Catherine invited students to conduct field interviews to better understand how their topic impacted the people in their community. Drawing from her own funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), Catherine would give a mini lesson on how to conduct field interviews, and even drafted an informed consent form for interviewers to give to interviewees to sign. By asking students to collected informed consent from their interviewees, Catherine is modeling ethical and professional practices for collecting data. As a journalism student, Catherine "had to do countless interviews" and had to, "write proposals for every single thing that [she] wanted to change." Therefore, she asked students to plan their interviews including questions, and write a proposal for their interview and submit them to her before they could start their research.

Using their research and the data they collected through interviews, the students were then asked to write about their findings in an op-ed article. In this writing assignment, students are asked to combine their first and secondhand research to share their opinion about the issue in a real-world genre of writing. By connecting both sets of

research, students are bridging the empirical evidence found through various sources to the local and individual experiences in their community. Through this writing assignment, students are raising their critical consciousness of the lived realities their selected civic action issues. This shows how Freire's ideas on critical consciousness and praxis contributed to the design of Catherine's civic action unit.

Mariela and Catherine drew from their own consciousness-raising experiences to design similar opportunities for their students. Similarly, Bethany designed a lesson to raise students' critical consciousness of the historical influences of the various issues impacting Indigenous communities. The goal of Bethany's civic action unit was for, "students to make an impact through storytelling," with, "students from Indigenous communities practicing the skill of advocacy through storytelling." This idea was spurred during a class discussion on the possible products students might be able to create to engage in civic action. As soon as storytelling as a form of action was suggest, several students' eyes light up, including Bethany. Some designed units that asked students to create documentary or to write a piece of narrative nonfiction, but storytelling meant something more to Bethany than an opportunity to teach creative writing. According to Bethany:

> Sharing stories is a really big part of our culture. My identity as a Navajo person is based off some of those stories that have been told and passed down over time…. I think that's important for this topic, because it allows students to use a skill they're already using and familiar with and going out into the community to spread that advocacy.

However, before students went out and collect stories from their communities and the issues they were experiencing, Bethany wanted her students to understand the history

that created those problems. To raise students' critical consciousness about the origins of these issues, Bethany created an activity where her students would read different treaties between the United Stated and various Native Nations.

The steps for the lesson are as follows: "Each student will be assigned a treaty to read. They will be given time to read the treaty independently and then briefly share with the class what the treaty is about, who the treaty was between, what the agreements were, and whether or not those agreements are withheld to this day."

Not only is Bethany working to raise her student's critical consciousness about the issues their communities experience but connect those realities to the historical and systemic forces that have created those problems (Brayboy, 2005). By understanding the origins of these problems, students can be better prepared to take action that address the root cause, not just the symptom.

Similar elements of student driven research are present in the other participant's civic action units. In Kristin's unit, she asks students to explore a social justice issue that, "could be affecting you personally, your school, your community, your family, your friends, or the world as a whole." In her assignment sheet, she tells her students, "You will become researchers and gather and create valuable information along the way to use as evidence" to support the law they will propose at the end of the unit. For David's unit, students research examples of civic action carried out by young people on DoSomething.org, a non-profit, digital platform designed exclusively for young people to get involved with other civic action projects.

Raising critical consciousness and engaging in praxis are not easy things to do. Throughout the semester, and especially during this project, these pre-service teachers expressed their concerns, fears, and doubts about how doing this work in their future classrooms. But they persevered. They continued to question and talk and share ideas, and they produced units that applied these important ideas into practice. Each participant reported feeling proud of their unit and said they planned on including their unit in their future classrooms. Below is the conclusion to Mariela's unit rationale:

> This is why civic action units matter. In fact, calling them it a unit would be wrong. These are the types of lessons, ideas, projects, and assignments that we should be consistently developing and implementing. These assignments are not extensions; they are the true meaning and purpose behind school. We lost that somewhere along the way and I would like to get it back. I would like to help bring it back. I have full faith in my fellow soon-to-be-graduates and the many wonderful teachers out there who are currently practicing these ideas. We're going to bring critical consciousness and praxis back into the classroom, one civic action at a time.

The participants engaged with and critically reflected on their own critical consciousness-raising experiences throughout the course. As a result, the participants used their experiences to inform and influence the design of their civic action units, which is a form of praxis, to create opportunities for their students to have similar experiences. These civic action units were designed to support the students' interests and to create opportunities for student centered research into the problems they identified, which decenters the classroom from the teacher's knowledge and encourages authentic problem-posing education experiences (Freire, 1970). Like Mariela, I have full faith in the participants in this study and their classmates that they will continue to work to raise

critical consciousness and engage in praxis with their future students. And in doing so, make the world a better place.

Youth Participatory Action Research

In their follow-up interviews, several of the participants pointed to youth participatory action research (YPAR) as one of the biggest influences for their civic action unit design. To help facilitate discussions with the pre-service teachers about the different possibilities for what their civic action units might look like, they read the chapter on civic action units in their textbook (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015) and "Revolutionizing Inquiry in Urban English Classrooms: Pursuing Voice and Justice Through Youth Participatory Action Research" (Mirra, Filipiak, Garcia, 2015). Both of these readings provide examples from the author's classrooms and helped the pre-service teachers conceptualize what could be possible with their civic action units. This provided the pre-service teachers ideas to begin designing their units, pulling pieces to best support their goals and contexts.

In youth participatory action research, young people are invited to, "develop and direct research projects that feature exploration of personal experiences and often-silenced community perspectives, and to disseminate that research in a multitude of forms tailored to a variety of audiences for the purpose of advancing social justice" (Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015, p. 49). The research conducted by young people is not limited to database research or relying on the work of others to provide the necessary data. Instead, young people are charged with going into their communities to collect data about their issues they are researching. This important shift positions young people as

experts in their research as opposed to just reporting on what other "experts" have to say. By positioning students as experts of their own communities, students are given the opportunity to share their expertise about the issues impacting their communities instead of relying on outsiders.

This repositioning of expertise was an influencing concept for several of the participants in the design of their civic action units. In her written unit rationale, Catherine cited youth participatory action research (YPAR) as an influence for her civic action unit design. In describing her unit, Catherine says:

> [The unit] will be structured around a YPAR model in which students will work in groups of 3 to 5 students to identify an issue of social injustice in their communities or nationally and develop research questions, collect and analyze original data through interviews, present their findings, and take action steps to address the issue through a proposal.

Here, Catherine is explicit about the influence YPAR had on the overall design of her civic action unit. The YPAR model of positioning students as "experts" helped Catherine move beyond her fears of not being able to support all of her students by knowing everything.

At first, Catherine had struggled with her civic action unit. Prior to the project, she had never been asked to design for civic action or social justice before, and her previous experiences designing instructional units did not seem to support what she was being asked to produce. Similar to how she had designed units previously, she wanted to be able to plan for every possibility and design a final project the would be structured and easy to grade using a traditional rubric.

However, after reading about YPAR, Catherine drew from her expertise as a journalism student to design a unit that allowed for students to go out into their communities to conduct interviews for part of their research. Designing a civic action unit was no longer an abstract or new idea, but it was now a familiar experience. Catherine's unit taught students how to write interview questions, how to collect participant consent, and how to write proposals for action. These were skills Catherine felt confident she could teach her students, because she had been taught how to do these things herself when she was a student.

In her follow-up interview, Catherine pointed to student choice and connecting their work to real world as aspects of her civic action unit that she wanted to continue to incorporate into her future classroom.

> The student choice thing, I think, is what I took away mostly that I want to bring into every aspect of my classroom. The fact of giving student choice to have student autonomy in what they do, I think, is really powerful. They can be the driving force of, "What do I actually want to do with this?" "What is specifically important to me?" I think that's something that I'm going to carry through absolutely everything that I do. Also, whatever they create, figuring out how we can put that into the real world. What can we actually do with this? I don't want to just assign essays… I want [them] to make something that's lasting, and meaningful, that we can extend beyond just that unit.

This shows a tremendous amount of growth from the beginning of the civic action unit to our follow-up interview. Before reading about YPAR and designing her unit around a YPAR approach to civic action, Catherine acknowledged that, "student choice made me really nervous because I like being in control." But now, "I have a very different mindset about that. Where I'm like this whole profession is supposed to be about unknowns." Along with student choice in topics, Catherine developed a passion for

helping students share and publish their work for a variety of audiences and purposes (Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015). Again, Catherine's experience of wading into the "unknowns" and sharing work with a wider audience was not something completely brand new for her. She had these critical literacies from her experience as a journalism student. However, YPAR helped her to make the connections between her prior knowledge and expertise to the designing of her civic action unit. While we often discussed the different funds of knowledge *students* brought to the class, it is equally important that the pre-service teachers recognized the knowledge and skills *they* bring to the classroom too.

For the other pre-service teachers, they saw YPAR as an opportunity to support students in taking meaningful action in their world. They all pointed to the voting age as a limiting factor in students' minds about their ability to tackle societal problems. For Mariela, she said:

> I like that [YPAR] pushed this idea that like you don't have to be 18 and vote to make a change because that sucks. Like it sucks to be 16, 15 or even like my 12-year-old's that are like, "Well, that's cool." And like, "Yeah. I know it's a problem, but there's nothing I can do about it." And like, I want to take away that feeling of helplessness because there's a lot that people can do.

Rather than waiting until students are seniors in high school to talk about civic action, through YPAR, teachers can engage students in authentic civic activism and address the "helplessness" students may feel toward oppressive systems.

Another participant, Kristin, saw a connection between YPAR and project-based learning, a popular approach which encourages students to work to solve real world problems.

> I never heard of YPAR before reading this article, and I think it is a more authentic take on problem and project-based learning. I like how this concept involves the students becoming experts as opposed to them seeking out expert statistics and opinions. I feel this form of learning contributes to the well being and advocacy of students, as they are the center of information, data, and research that connects to their underlying problem.

While project-based learning often encourages students to find the answers to problems through traditional academic research, YPAR repositions students as experts and values their community-based findings. If the knowledge and experiences of students' communities are listened to when addressing problems, then the underlying problem can better be addressed. This is in contrast to how community problems are addressed–and often not solved–by outsiders who enter into communities as "experts" but may not have the critical sociohistorical knowledge to create lasting change.

In our class discussion on YPAR, I suggested that the pre-service teachers conduct their own classroom research to inform the design of their civic action units, especially for those teachers who were unsure of what to focus on for their unit's topic. The pre-service teachers were encouraged to survey the students in their internships to see what civic action or social movements they were most interested in learning more about and potentially participating in. To illustrate how to collect this data as a teacher, I shared with them a story about how I came to a list of social justice topics when I was a high school teacher. I asked my high school students to write out three social justice topics that they would be interested in reading more about on a piece of paper. After collecting the papers, I tallied the different topics on a spreadsheet. This survey produced 38 different topics students wanted to read more about. From this list of 38, the final number of topics was limited to eight, and student then ranked their topic preferences

from 1 to 8. Using these rankings, I placed students in research groups based on their top choices. To help narrow the possibilities for my pre-service teachers, I suggested they could make a list of predetermined topics and ask students to select which ones they were interested in. If there was a topic the students were interested in that wasn't listed, then they could provide a space for "Other."

Several pre-service teachers polled their internship students for potential topics to help with their unit's topic and design. David shared about his experience polling his middle schoolers, inquiring about their topics of interests regarding civic action.

> David: I polled my students. I got like 112 responses from all the 7th graders. And it was just a simple question like what's a problem in your global community that you want to get fixed?
>
> A: And you did this for the project?
>
> David: Yeah, I did it. It was for the project, but it was also like, it was inspired by the project, but it was also something I think I just want to do as a teacher like every year…. I'd say about a third of the responses were kids who wanted to deal with swearing on campus. This is 7th graders. But that was like an issue that was bothering them that they wanted to do something about… And then other students have really broad issues. Multiple students brought up police violence, food insecurity, homophobia. Like, bullying was a big thing that came up. I would say bullying was number two, and then vaping was number three. And like all of that was things I wouldn't have thought of. I would have been thinking about entirely other issues.

Several pre-service teachers in the class wanted to design their civic action units for high school juniors and seniors, because the pre-service teachers believed that the 16-18-year-old students would be more "ready" or "mature" to engage in civic action than younger students. However, David's poll shows that even students on the young end of the secondary spectrum are capable of identifying problems in their communities. While "swearing on campus" may not be the first thing an adult thinks of when it comes to civic

action, the very fact that it matters to those young people makes it worthy of their teachers' time. Young people are capable of learning various skills to engage in civic action, and young peoples' agency needs to be supported and provided opportunities to grow within their learning environments. It is not the teacher's job to determine what issues or forms of civic action are worthy, valuable, or realistic. Rather, teachers need to support students as they grow and learn to navigate their world; a world that may be recognized and understood differently by the students.

Critical Media Literacy

Early in the semester, we read and discussed what it means to teach for a critical English education (Morrell, 2005). While the article is written for English teacher educators, the pre-service teachers resonated with the call for teaching the "skills to deconstruct dominant texts carefully" and the "skills that allow [students] to create their own critical texts that can be used in the struggle for social justice" (p. 313). In fact, even before we read about critical media literacy (see: Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, & Everett, 2017) to further the pre-service teachers' thinking about their civic action units, Mariela, Catherine, and David had worked together to design educational resources to teach critical media literacy after reading *Dear Martin* (Stone, 2017) for their YA book group project.

Critical media pedagogy is "the educational process that makes young people aware of the role that media play, both positively and problematically, in shaping social thought" (Morrell, Duenas, Garcia-Garza, & Lopez, 2013, p. 3). After reading about the media bias in *Dear Martin,* Catherine and David designed teaching materials to help raise

students' critical consciousness of how people are represented and how stories are reported in corporate news media. Then, taking a critical look at the YA novel itself, Mariela designed activities to address the representation of black women, which she found "troubling" and "problematic" in the novel. These pre-service teachers' commitment to a critical English education (Morrell, 2005) continued to develop and made its way into their civic action units.

For the pre-service teachers, one of the key components of their civic action units was teaching students to recognize and critique the ways media shapes social thought on certain issues. These lessons and activities draw from several trending social topics to engage students with issues that are current and relevant. These social topics include: #BlackLivesMatter, the protests at Standing Rock, March for Our Lives, and climate change.

Kristin designed her civic action unit to raise her students' critical consciousness on a variety of trending social topics. In order to present her students with a variety of possibilities for their civic action projects, she showed her students select video clips that showed "raw emotions, courage, vulnerability, and perseverance through adversity." The first two videos Kristin planned on showing her students were speeches by young people: Greta Thunberg's speech at the United Nations and Emma Gonzalez's speech at the March for Our Lives rally in Washington D.C. The third video clip was about the youth led protests at Standing Rock. Kristin wanted to include the video about the youth at Standing Rock, because it showed students an issue that was not covered by mainstream media like Thunberg's or Gonzalez's speeches. With the Standing Rock clip, Kristin

wanted to show students that their focus for civic action didn't have to be popular issues covered by the media. Their activism could be about a local problem, and just because it may not receive the same media coverage as other activism efforts, it did not make the issue any less important.

Drawing from her journalism background, Catherine designed lessons and activities for students to examine digital news media coverage of different topics. In her lesson plan, Catherine wrote two questions for her opening/anticipatory set:

> 1) How do you find your news sources and how do you get your news? Is it from online, the newspaper, the TV, word of mouth, or social media?
> 2) How can we assess whether a news article/source is credible and objective?

Following this opening discussion, Catherine would facilitate what she calls a "Credibility Carousel." In this activity, students work together to analyze and critique a set of news articles about the same topic. These topics include climate change, Colin Kaepernick's protests, Trump's family separation policies, and March for Our Lives. According to Catherine, "The purpose of this is for students to conduct their own inquiries and examine news and media sources with a critical eye looking for objective facts and bias language." After learning how to analyze news media, the students were asked to conduct research on their topics, and then, using their interview data, write an op-ed article raising awareness about their issue. In doing so, students become critical producers of a popular news media genre.

Kristin and Catherine saw teaching about media bias as a way to position themselves as "unbiased" to their students. One of their biggest concerns with bringing in social topics that they were passionate about was that they might be seen as overbearing

and overly biased. As a result, they would be confronted and challenged by students and parents with different perspectives, ultimately leading to confrontation with administrators. However, if they could teach students how to critique media and news bias, then they could take themselves out of the equation when it came to the civic action their students took. In her follow-up interview, Kristin described why she addressed media bias in her civic action unit:

> This isn't my bias, your bias, your parents bias, media bias. Like these are facts and this is what we are working with, so what do you do with these facts to create like proactive change?

By recognizing the bias in different media sources, students can begin to separate bias, opinions, dogma, rhetoric from the facts and lived experiences of others. Through this raising of critical consciousness, students are more able to critique and challenge the bias and "fake news" in their daily lives and about their civic action topics.

While the notion that there is an objective, unbiased standard in the news–or teaching–is a myth that critical educators must always work to disrupt, teaching critical media literacy can help students understand how media continuously shapes their perceptions about the world. In doing so, teachers working for civic action can support students as they develop the critical skills necessary for understanding various perspectives and challenging one's own perspective.

It is also important to recognize that the mere inclusion of these trending social topics is a political act. Rather than deferring to the norm, these teachers are making a political statement about the issues and perspectives that are being valued in the

classroom. Rather than upholding systemic oppressors, these teachers are encouraging students that their voices and ideas are capable of disrupting these systems.

Instead of using critical media literacy to position herself out of the equation, Mariela showed her students how critical media literacy helped her find her civic action passion. As a vocal advocate for #BlackLivesMatter, Mariela drew from her experiences with the Trayvon Martin case to model critical media literacy with images. In her lesson plan rationale, Mariela states, "students are constantly bombarded with 'news' through their televisions, Twitter and Facebook feeds, SnapChats, and other social media platforms." Often times, these news stories are limited to images and brief captions. According to Mariela, "The difficulty with pictures is that they aren't usually doctored. The photos are real, [but] the context within which the media frames them is not." This is often seen in the media's use of compromising photos of Black victims juxtaposed with humanizing photos of white perpetrators (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, & Everett, 2017). To facilitate this activity and discussion, Mariela provided students with some of the different photos used by the media during the Trayvon Martin case of both the 17-year-old Trayvon and his murder.

In the activity, students would be given time to examine and reflect on the photos and share their reactions and initial perceptions based on the photos with their peers. Then, Mariela would provide contextual information about the Trayvon Martin case using news reports from mainstream media outlets, including CNN and Fox News. After learning more about the case, the students would be provided a new set of images from

the case and given a chance to discuss how their perceptions of the images had changed from the beginning of the lesson.

Mariela recognized the potential challenge of this activity when she designed this lesson plan. In her lesson plan's assessment section, she wrote, "This will be a difficult subject and there might be very different opinions…. The most important part of the lesson is keeping an open dialogue."

Instead of searching for "right" answers, Mariela embraced the vulnerability of critical media literacy and sought to raise student critical consciousness through dialogue. Unlike Catherine and Kristin, who used critical media literacy as a way to separate themselves from the potential reaction from students and parents, Mariela used critical media literacy to facilitate discussions about these important topics.

Designing for Specific Contexts

In this section, I share findings that address the question: How are critical pedagogies adapted for the specific contexts in which the civic action units are designed? I describe aspects of the participants' civic action units that show the ways in which the participants designed their units for specific contexts. Early in the semester we discussed the importance of context when discussing students and curriculum. Critical pedagogies are challenging, because they are context dependent (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; Morrell, 2005; Smagorinksy, 2009; Alim & Paris, 2017). As many teachers know, no class is the same. A teacher can even have wildly different experiences teaching the same lesson to a class from period to the next in the same local context. The pre-service teachers designed their civic action units for a setting with which they had previous

experience, and they designed their units to be culturally proactive (Garcia & O-Donnell-Allen, 2015) by being flexible to account for the various experiences and knowledge students will bring to the classroom that they are unable to fully predict.

(Re)Imagining Future Students

I've titled this section (Re)Imagining Future Students, because throughout the semester the pre-service teachers engaged in both a reimagining and an imagining of who does and will make up their classrooms. Every pre-service teacher came into the course with an idea of what their students would and should look like, but as we read and discussed throughout the semester that began to change. The pre-service teachers became more aware of the "white gaze" in education (Alim & Paris, 2017), the demographic realities of education (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018), how those shifting demographics has led to increased segregation (Meckler & Rabinowitz, 2019), and how non-white students are disproportionally punished in their home state (Altavena, 2019). As a result, the pre-service teachers had to reimagine who their future students would be within this new reality of education, and they had to imagine students who they may not have considered before in their future classrooms.

Designing for White Students. Kristin registered for my course hours before our first class, and she didn't return for another month because of a medical situation. She remained connected to the class through the "Hallway Conversations" discussion board where she shared her thoughts and ideas about what we were reading in class. While it was difficult to not be a part of the classroom environment and engage in the ongoing dialogue (Freire, 1974), she stayed up to date through some of her friends in the class.

For her first project, Kristin researched and presented on how to teach about white privilege in the English classroom. While some of her peers did not think it was an English teacher's job to discuss such a sensitive topic, for Kristin, this topic was one of the main reasons she chose to become an English teacher. Early in her undergraduate journey, Kristin interned in an English Language Learners (ELL) classroom, which in Arizona is mostly Spanish speaking students. She recalled going to her internship the day after the 2016 presidential election seeing the fear on her students faces who were unsure of what the election meant for them. And in the same school, she saw four male students, "decked out in MAGA Trump" gear, celebrating the election. As a result of these two conflicting responses by students within her internship,

> I had this sense of urgency that, like, what can I do to get involved? Like, what can I do to help people who are about to be oppressed by this person and his supporters? And it was very scary. It was very surreal, but it's what helped me to get out there and say just because it doesn't affect me directly doesn't mean that it's not worth, and doesn't mean that I shouldn't use, my privilege.

Kristin's work was grounded in her desire to help people, like the ELL students in her internship, who were oppressed by a president who spewed xenophobic rhetoric and his supports who were emboldened by it (Natanson, Cox, & Stein, 2020). As a white teacher, Kristin recognized her own privilege, and, instead of avoiding white privilege, she wanted to raise her students' consciousness of this reality.

One of the readings Kristin assigned in her civic action unit was the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) handout titled, "Social Justice: Understanding Race and Privilege" (2016). This document was intended to be a resource, "in response to recent acts of racial violence and the increasingly uncivil discourse

occurring across our country" (p. 1). The document addresses privilege and why it exists for certain group, and how privilege manifests in school settings. There are also self-reflection questions which start with the question: "When was the last time you had to think about your ethnicity, race, gender identity, ability level, religion, and/or sexual orientation?" (p. 4). While a document produced for the NASP is not necessarily written for an audience of high school students, Kristin is providing her students with materials for their consideration to engage in problem-posing education with her students (Freire, 1970).

Building on her students' discussion of privilege, Kristin designed an activity in her civic action unit in which her students would participate in a "privilege walk." According to Kristin, "many of my students, reading about something that is important isn't the same as being in the shoes of those people." The privilege walk, "is designed to give students some perspective on the privileges they hold in their lives, and how society sees those privileges." By participating in the privilege walk, students will, "learn to recognize how power and privilege can affect our lives even when we are not aware it is happening." For the privilege walk, students line up shoulder to shoulder, and the facilitator will read statements about privilege and ask students to step forward or backwards depending on the statement. Kristin had a list of 34 privilege statements that she would read to her students during the walk. Some of the privilege statements and step direction, include:

- If your ancestors were forced to come to the USA not by choice, take one step back.
- If you have health insurance take one step forward

- If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.
- If your parents attended college take one step forward.
- If you are able to take a step forward or backward take two steps forward.

While Kristin hoped this activity, common on university campuses, would raise her students' critical consciousness of their various, sometimes unspoken, privileges, it is an activity that could bring unwanted attention to Kristin and her school. In 2017, a state lawmaker unsuccessfully introduced House Bill 2120 which threated to remove state funding from universities who held campus events or classes that discuss social justice or issues of privilege (King, 2017).

Recognizing the privilege some students have, Mariela designed her civic action unit to engage her privileged students. She argued that, "Students who don't face civic issues on a daily basis are the ones who tend to have the most power to change these ideas. These students are the ones who tend to have more opportunities, more affluence, and overall just more of a voice in society." Rather than asking these students to find problems in their privileged communities, Mariela asks them to find ways to leverage their resources, influences, and power to support others.

For her Ally Unit, Mariela shares her experiences as a Hispanic advocate for the #BlackLivesMatter movement to model for her students how to join social movements, respectfully. To teach this necessary balancing act, Mariela used two texts to engage in those discussions.

The first text is a young adult novel set in the midst of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015). This novel is written by two authors, one black and one white, and is told from the alternating perspectives of two

male teen protagonists, one black and one white. Prior to designing her civic action unit, Mariela read *Dear Martin* (Stone, 2017) for project two, which is another book about the issues that sparked the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Although Mariela voiced her concern with the novel's representation of black women and designed teaching materials to disrupt the novel's representation of black women, she decided to pick a new novel for her project. When I asked her why she decided to design work around *All-American Boys* instead of building off her work for project two, she said:

> I liked [*All-American Boys*] because it was told from the two perspectives. Like, and the whole point of the ally project was to be that ally. And I think that any other text that didn't show both sides wasn't going to work for the project…. It's like how hard it was for him. How hard it was for both of them, you know. And like being an ally kind of, it's a difficult place to be because you know and you worry about like your legitimacy to speak up, you know.

Conscious of her future students, Mariela wanted to pick a novel that both her white privileged students and black students could see themselves in. While understanding the importance of representation in the classroom (San Pedro, 2017), Mariela also selected a text to support the critical consciousness of her student by providing them mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Sims Bishops, 1990) to understand the cultural perspectives of the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

Building from this dual perspective young adult novel, Mariela also included an additional pop culture text to address issues of white privilege. Using the song "White Privilege II" by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, Mariela wanted to engage students in a discussion about white privilege and how it can be difficult for non-members to find their place in social action. Following the listening of the song, Mariela asked students some of the following questions for a journal prompt:

> When it comes to activism, what is the role of allies? What is white privilege? Are there other types of privilege that we hold? What are you willing to take a stand for? Why?

Along with connecting the song about white privilege to the unit goal of developing allies in the struggle for social justice, Mariela opens up herself to a very vulnerable conversation. “Are there other types of privilege that we hold?” This question opens not only the students up to self-critique, but the teacher as well. Education privilege, ableism privilege, economic privilege, these are privileges that many teachers and students wakl into the classroom every day with but may never consider or see as privilege. Mariela is opening herself up to critique her own privilege alongside her students which is an authentic and honest approach to dealing with the topic of privilege. This pedagogical move of vulnerability helps Mariela connect to the emotions and experiences of her white students. Instead of feeling “attacked’ by their Hispanic teacher, her students can relate to her in their processes of grappling with and challenging their privileges.

Community and Cultural Wealth. Although we did not read about community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), discussions about the different aspects of community cultural wealth (i.e. navigational capital, familial capital, linguistic capital) were common topics as we discussed asset pedagogies (Moll et al., 1992; Alim & Paris, 2017; Irizarry, 2017). For example, we discussed the navigational capital and familial capital of the pre-service teachers who were first-generation college students compared with the pre-service teachers whose parent(s) had gone to college. Some of the first generation pre-service teachers shared with their peers some of their struggles sharing with their families about

their needs and responsibilities as college students, whereas their peers did not have to worry about those challenges because of their family's navigational capital. We also talked about the familial capital the first-generation pre-service teachers possessed that helped them persevere and connect their learning back to their communities.

Bethany was one of these first-generation college students, and these discussions helped her develop her civic action unit. In the early weeks of designing her civic action unit, Bethany used her weekly reflections as a space to share her struggles as a first-generation student. Over the course of the semester, Bethany became overwhelmed with her course work. There were days she would come to class, sit away from her peers at an accessibility desk on the side of classroom and not interact with her peers. Then, unrelated to Bethany's personal struggles, I took time in class to talk about the importance of teacher self-care in regard to their personal, mental, and physical well-being. This discussion was prompted by the "No Bad Questions" survey I gave at the beginning of the semester and some of the venting occurred in other students' weekly reflections. According to Bethany:

> I drove home tearing up because [that discussion] freed me from the burden and stress of acting like I have all of my shit together all the time.
>
> I just feel like there's so much fucking pressure on me that I am carrying. I'll be the first fucking person in my family to graduate from college. My parents don't understand how complex this shit really is and most of the time I feel like I can't let them down. I have younger siblings who look up to me. I have family back home on the reservation that are going through some deep shit to the point where sometimes all I want to do is go back.

In the following weeks, Bethany shared that she went to speak to a therapist and that it helped her get back on track to finish her semester and make some changes in her

life. In class, she started sitting with her peers again, and she started sharing more during class discussions. During our class discussion on backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) and how to plan for post-core literacies for life (Moje, Giroux, Muehling, 2017), Bethany's face lit up as she realized what the focus of her civic action unit would be. After class, she came up to me and ask whether or not it was okay if she designed a unit in which her students' civic action would be storytelling.

Bethany was planning on teaching at a Native American reservation school after graduating as part of a scholarship requirement. With this future context in mind, Bethany's civic action unit asked Indigenous students to interview members of their community to understand how different inequities, such as access to clean water or groceries, impacted people's lives. Then, her students would write and share stories about these inequities to raise awareness and engage in civic action. According to Bethany, the unit's goal was for:

> Students to make an impact through storytelling. I envisioned students from Indigenous communities practicing the skill of advocacy through storytelling. Students will be responsible for going into their community to spread awareness and to share/collect stories…. Students will also be responsible for writing a narrative nonfiction essay to further share their own personal experiences while connecting to the research they investigated. I hope to bring awareness to the manner while encouraging students to become advocates for their themselves and their communities.

Bethany decided to use storytelling, a powerful genre of writing to elicit social change. Narrative nonfiction has also been used to connect academic writing standards to the lived experiences of students, in doing so, creating opportunities for young people to share their truth with a larger audience (Griffith, 2016).

Her desire to design a unit around storytelling was grounded in her beliefs about students and informed by our discussions on asset pedagogy. Bethany recognized that, "students come into the classroom with already so much knowledge and experience and that's valid." However, most classrooms are not designed to "hear" students and learn from their knowledge and experiences.

This especially was true for Bethany when it came to her identity as a Navajo person. During our follow-up interview, Bethany pointed to her personal experiences of having her identity erased by teachers and schools as a motivating factor for her civic action unit. To combat this erasure, Bethany designed a unit that would celebrate one of the many valuable literacies of Indigenous people.

> Sharing stories is a really big part of our culture. My identity as a Navajo person is based off some of those stories that have been told and passed down over time…. I think that's important for this topic, because it allows students to use a skill they're already using and familiar with and going out into the community to spread that advocacy.

For the unit's final project, Bethany asked students to complete four requirements: 1) document community stories, 2) multimodal essay, 3) journal submissions, and 4) class presentation. With the documented community stories, students were given the freedom to select a medium of their choice to collect and share community stories, such as video recordings, photographs, or audio recordings of their interviews. These community stories needed to focus on at least one of the inequities experienced in the community. The multimodal essay asked students to share their personal connections to the inequity they documented using their interviews and traditional academic research.

These two assignments culminated into a class presentation where the students shared, "their projects, the final outcome, reflections, and overall impact."

In Bethany's civic action unit, she designed opportunities for her Indigenous students engage with various aspects of their community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). The unit asked students to use their linguistic capital of storytelling, familial capital of "community history, memory, and cultural intuition" (p.79), and social capital of understanding, "networks of people and community resources" (p. 79). Additionally, Bethany worked to support the resistant capital which refers to, "knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80) by asking students to analyze and critique the treaties between the United States and Native Nations (described earlier in this chapter).

Navigating Systemic Forces

In this section, I share findings that address the question: In what ways are critical pedagogies negotiated with other systemic educational forces (i.e. standards, administrators, district policies, parents)? I begin by describing how classroom activities and discussions contribute to the participant's efforts to design within and around systemic educational forces. These findings are grounded primarily in acts of vulnerability and the sharing of teaching stories (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2013). I then draw from follow-up interview data to understand how the pre-service teachers, in their own words, position their civic action units and teaching in relation to two of the most common systemic influences on teachers: school and district policy and colleagues.

Standards

There were two questions I often received from my pre-service teachers at the beginning of the semester regarding educational standards and the critical pedagogies we were reading about and discussing. The first, "How do you meet the standards if your curriculum is student-centered?" and second, "How do you make time to teach for social justice, when there's already so much expected from English teachers?"

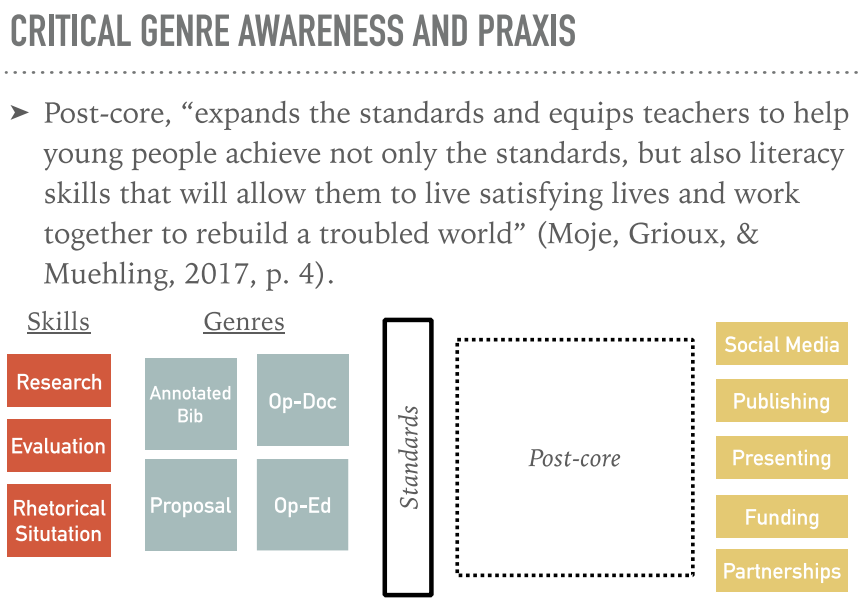
Valid questions. Questions that many seasoned teachers would struggle to answer. As we moved through the semester, students suspended their skepticism in regard to the work and standards. But, eventually, the issue of standards would need to be addressed.

These questions and concerns resurfaced as students began planning and designing their civic action units. The pre-service teachers in my class were unsure about how to plan for student advocacy in a way that was authentic and student-lead. How do you support activism when every student is working on different topics? How do you assess civic action when everyone's action will look different? Again, valid questions from pre-service teachers who had no prior experience with a project that gave so much ownership to students.

To conceptually address these difficult questions, I shared with my class the slide in figure 8 that I was preparing to share at a national conference. I created the diagram to connect the work of critical genre awareness in a writing course to praxis by using the concept of "post-core" (Moje, Giroux, & Muehling, 2017) to frame it within the discussion of educational standards. Moving from left to right, I list some of the academic skills English teachers are charged with teaching students. Then, I use examples from my

writing courses to show how teachers can use genre-based writing instruction to meet educational standards. Those are the student products that teachers can assess using a grading rubric. However, from there, teachers can imagine beyond the assessment and extend those teachable genres to tangible, real-world action.

Figure 8. Post-core Concept Slide



Prior to sharing the slide with my class, I explained that the slide was not intended to represent an outline for their civic action units, instead, it was intended provide them a framework for thinking about their activities, lesson plans, and final assessment. Several students said that the diagram helped them to think about standards in a new way, and others asked me to share the slide on our course Canvas page.

Lesson plans being standards based was not a requirement for their project. In fact, the pre-service teachers were free to create lesson plans using any template or model

they found to be the most helpful. Prior to this project, the participants had only ever been asked to create lesson plans using the college of education's lesson plan template, a long and exhaustive template that often resulted in several pages for a single lesson. While such a lesson plan template has its merits, especially in preparing teaching who've never written a lesson plan before, I wanted my pre-service teachers to develop a lesson plan template of their own. A template they could design and feel comfortable with, considering most of them would have their own classrooms soon.

In class, I facilitated an activity in which we analyzed the lesson plan genre, similarly to how I would invite writing students to analyze a writing genre. We discussed the rhetorical situation of lesson plans: Who are lesson plans written for? who reads them? What is the purpose of a lesson plan? What does the author want to demonstrate to their audience? What are the conventions of a lesson plan? What are the socially constructed expectations of a lesson plan?

After our brainstorming discussion, I shared with the pre-service teachers two sample lesson plans from my career as a high school teacher: one from my first semester, and one from my last (Appendix D). I shared about why I included certain features such as the "Topic, Level, and Assessment" section in my first lesson plan and the "WICOR" section in my second. Both features were added to reflect the different initiatives at my school at the time. From this activity, I want to focus on two points of discussion that contributed to the standards-based approach to the lesson plans the pre-service teachers created.

We discussed how lesson plans are sometimes used to punitively control teachers. Some students shared about their experiences in their mentorship where the staff was required to submit lesson plans, and the amount of time that took each day, especially for teachers with multiple preps. In response, I shared a story from my first year of teaching about how every new teacher was required to send the principal their lesson plans for the day. After a submitting detailed lesson plans for over a semester with no feedback, I stopped. Only to find out a year later, from the principal, that I was passed over for a position because I "failed to follow through" on my lesson plans. Therefore, when creating a lesson plan, teachers had to be mindful of the different power influences in their school and district, such as standards, initiatives, curriculum, and language.

The second point of discussion that contributed to the designing of standards-based lesson plans was that standards and lesson plans did not necessarily mean an adhering to traditional content and curriculum. In my two sample lesson plans, the lesson themselves are similar and simple: read the article(s) and analyze or summarize the writing. But the articles selected demonstrate my commitment to consciousness-raising and culturally relevant texts. In my first lesson plan, I asked students to read an op-ed about Assad's use of chemical weapons in Syria (Nasr, 2013), which ultimately lead to the humanitarian crisis in the region. In the second lesson plan, I asked students to read "Why is Othello Black?" (Butler, 2015) to provide historical context for our reading of Shakespeare's *Othello* in which we would be discussing how outsiders are treated in the play. From this discussion, Mariela had an idea that she shared with the class. If she

wanted to strive to be a culturally relevant teacher, then she should a section that clearly states how she planned to be culturally relevant in the lesson plan.

Colleagues

Along with the curricular influence of standards, many pre-service teachers worry about the curricular influence of their future colleagues. Often times pre-service teachers are encouraged to sit in on grade-level meetings at their internships. Many have witnessed how–despite a teacher's best intentions–if they are unable to sway their colleagues on a new pedagogical strategy, then it is difficult to implement change.

At the end of our follow-up interviews, I gave the participants an opportunity to ask me questions. Kristin and Catherine asked me questions about my experience as a high school teacher, how I incorporated civic action, and how I started doing this work. Bethany was caught off guard by my prompting and took some time to think of questions while I refilled my coffee. Mariela and David wanted to know about the study, what I was looking for, and what I was finding. Despite the range of questions, but they all eventually asked for advice on how to survive student teaching.

Mariela was the most concerned about her impending student teaching experience. The mentor teacher she was going to be working with was one she was familiar with from a previous internship. While she respected him as a teacher, as a "soldier" of an educator, she knew now that her teaching did not align with his style anymore. Before participating in the course, she would have never tried to design a civic action unit. She, "would've given [me] the dumbest unit on grammar, or like some writing five paragraph [essays], or some stupid thing." However, she now felt compelled

to design units that mattered to students, that had meaning outside of the classroom. But creating units and activities that allow students to take charge apply their learning to their lives requires a letting go and trust from the teacher. However, her mentor teacher, "very much is a believer that kids need to be controlled and that they don't know how to control themselves." This approach to students, no longer aligned with Mariela's views of teaching.

Ultimately, Mariela just couldn't wait to have her own classroom space. Where she could be in control of the procedures, of the content, and the atmosphere of her classroom. All the while Mariela recognized that her classroom and her first year of teaching might not be perfect.

> I like to think that I'm probably going to be a mess the first year. I'm prepared for that as I figure out how to navigate things. But I think, hopefully the goal is, that my classroom will be a place where students can bring their ideas, and can bring their passions, and goals.

Halfway through her student teaching, Mariela e-mailed me to say thank you for assigning the article about acquiescence, accommodation, and resistance (Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002). Throughout her student teaching experience, she had to remind herself that while she had to acquiesce her mentor teacher's methods now, it was just a phase. Mariela's passion for critical pedagogies wasn't going to die in her student teaching.

Unlike Mariela, Catherine and Kristin knew they would be student teaching in classrooms that were supportive of their ideas and passions for civic action.

Catherine started student teaching on the first day of classes, whereas most student teachers wouldn't go to their classrooms until a week later. She wanted to jump

right in and get started. This decision would prove beneficial for Catherine's relationship with the students. On the first day of class, she built trust with her students by asking for their preferred pronouns. Catherine knew she could make such a request because the English department at her school encouraged social justice education practices. Not only did she feel supported by her school's department, but she felt supported by her mentor teacher. At the beginning of a social justice unit, her mentor teacher asked students to participate in an exercise.

> At the beginning of the social justice unit, she said, "Raise your hand, if you all believe that all people should live in a safe world? Raise your hand, if you believe that everyone should have the opportunity to be accepted for who they are? Raise your hand, if you believe that everyone has the right to happiness, all this stuff." She goes, "Okay, now look around." She's like, "Everyone is raising their hand. That means we don't have any extremists in here. If we had any extremists in here, that didn't believe that all people have the right to happiness, didn't believe that everyone has a right to safety, and acceptance, we wouldn't be able to have productive conversations in here."

This anticipatory exercise by the mentor teacher provided Catherine with a new strategy for addressing differing opinions and perspectives in the classroom. While students may disagree on how to address social problems, that doesn't mean that students who disagree with each other want the worst for the other person. As long as all the students agreed to support everyone's right to happiness, safety, and acceptance, then they could engage in civil discourse about different topics, working to understand another side's point of view.

Catherine acknowledged that she was fortunate to have been placed at a school with a mentor teacher who supports and encourages her passion for social justice education. When asked what it might be like to do this work in a school that wasn't as

supportive, which is a real possibility for her first teaching job, Catherine said, “I think with the lack of support in a school, it would be really hard. If you're not having your administration and colleagues on board.”

Inspired by her experience with her mentor teacher, Catherine pointed to the importance of a good mentor to support her if she ends up teaching at an unsupportive school. For Catherine, a good mentor would be there to listen and let her “talk about the issues” she’d face at school, and they would also encourage her work, “because a lot of this stuff I am really passionate about, and I do believe in.” Along with being a support system, Catherine wants to find a mentor who can help her reach her goals. She would like someone “that sees the same vision as I do,” and who checks in, “making sure that I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing and keeping that confidence within myself. Knowing this is good, quality work that should be done.” Much like Mariela, Catherine is being proactive by planning ways to keep her passion for social justice education from being stifled.

Kristin, much like Catherine, was fortunate to be working with a supportive mentor teacher for her student teaching experience. During the study, Kristin was interning in the teacher’s classroom, and the mentor teacher would ask Kristin, “What are you learning in your teaching classes? What can we bring into class?” As a result, Kristin and her mentor teacher decided to adopt the young adult novels used for project two in the course for their school’s new literature unit which asked teachers to break away from the canon.

This support and willingness to try new things encouraged Kristin to push herself to be innovative with her course assignments and incorporate the issues she was passionate about. Making a change in the world through teaching is why Kristin decided to switch majors from sociology to English education. Teaching about social justice and inequality are key to Kristin's teacher identity and philosophy.

> If you don't know [social injustice] exists, then how is there room to make change? If you are not willing, you may not understand, but if you are not willing to understand, you know, you just need to be willing. You may not get it now, but if you are willing to, you know, listen to people, talk to people, get out into the community…. If I am a part of the problem, what can I do to be a part of the solution.

With this focus driving her work, Kristin designed her civic action unit with her student teaching context in mind. Rather than the civic action unit being a unit that she may one day get to teach, she knew that with her supportive mentor teacher she might actually teach the unit the following semester.

Imagining beyond his current context, David saw his civic action unit as an opportunity to foster a legacy of civic action in his future school. He wanted his unit to be the beginning of a school-wide movement to increase the civic action at his school and establishing a school culture for activism and change. According to David,

> You can have an entire campus [involved] with this unit rolled into like the whole first part of the second semester, for example. Where the math teachers know what's happening, so they're teaching statistical analysis in this period of time. The science teacher knows what's happening, so they teach environment and biology in this time. Whatever is relevant, whatever we decide is relevant kind of based on what we get from our surveys. Because I think the surveying the student should be a part of it too. And the idea would be that there would kind of be this whole campus movement around whatever this period of the year is around this.

Beyond his mentor teacher, or his colleagues in the English department, David sees teaching toward civic action as a mobilizing influence for interdisciplinary collaboration. This vision for a school wide effort is more than an interdisciplinary unit, it is an effort to hear the students through the surveys and work alongside them to help the students achieve their goals.

Parents and Policies

The unpredictable contexts that pre-service teachers may work in during their career can make it difficult to imagine how different pedagogical approaches may look or work in an unknown future context. Despite this uncertainty, the two systemic forces that consistently influenced our class discussion on these critical pedagogies were parents and school policies. Often these two forces would be conflated into a teacher's persistent boogieman, waiting around every corner, every page turn, every discussion to find reason for the teacher's punishment or dismissal. While teachers do experience pressure and challenges from parents and school policies, these fears would sometimes overshadow the potential and possibilities for critical pedagogies in schools. Teacher fear should not be the determining factor for whether or not students should be given educational opportunities to engage in critical consciousness and praxis. Additionally, these horror stories of parents and administrators are experiences resulting from specific contexts with unique communities and schools. What may be considered taboo at school A does not mean it will be seen the same way at school B. Being a critical pedagogue requires careful attention to the unique contexts for in which one is teaching. When asked in her follow-up what challenges she expected to face, Catherine said:

> Catherine: Backlash, I definitely anticipate backlash. Depending on, I guess, what school I'm at, as well. I think that was something brought up a lot in our class, probably with every discussion, "How are you going to handle parents with this and parents with that?" I do think it depends on where you're teaching. Because where I grew up and where I went to high school, if this work was done, parents would have freaked out.
>
> A: Yeah.
>
> Catherine: I'm aware of that. Where I'm at right now, I think parents would be so encouraging of it. They would love it.

While aware of her own community's potential reaction to her civic action unit, Catherine also recognizes that in her current context and community her civic action unit would be loved. Instead of viewing her current community as a potential adversary to her work, she saw them as potential supporters. By viewing her students' communities and parents as a potential positive force, Catherine felt confident in taking a new step in becoming a more inclusive teacher.

On her first day with her new students, Catherine invited her students to share their preferred pronouns with her on their name cards. This was something Catherine had never thought to do before. However, it was a practice I modeled in our course, and we discussed further after reading about a Queer Literacy Framework (Miller, 2015). Coming from a religious conservative background, Catherine's family and friends didn't "see eye-to-eye" with her about asking students about their pronouns, fearing what some parents might say. Despite these fears and the risk inherent with a new practice, Catherine went ahead in asking her sophomores for their pronouns. As a result, her students appreciated her acknowledgement of their humanity, and her students were participating all week. But for Catherine, this practice wasn't about getting students more engaged to

do their schoolwork. It was about building her class from a "humanistic approach" one that respects "other human experiences" and teaches "empathy." Once students feel seen as valued human beings, then they can begin to exist in the classroom.

School and district policies were another common topic of concern for the pre-service teachers. In a state without teacher tenure and a strong teacher union, many pre-service teachers worried that they may break a rule or policy with their civic action units that would result in their termination. The desire to protect their jobs, while understandable, positioned some of the pre-service teachers on the side of oppressive policies. These classroom discussions often produced moments of tension between the pre-service teachers. Bethany would struggle to hide her look of shock toward some pre-service teachers' resignation to policies. Catherine and Kristin would share stories from their internships to challenge the notion of not doing anything. And, Mariela would often raise her hand to throw out a deeply challenging question about the purpose of teaching for us to wrestle with. In her follow-up interview, Mariela shared her frustration with these moments.

> Mariela: I got frustrated sometimes in our class because like people would be like, "Well, that's against policy, isn't it?" I was like, ugh!
>
> A: Yeah.
>
> Mariela: Just because it's against policy doesn't make it wrong, you know?
>
> A: Right.
>
> Mariela: And it's like important that we consistently check ourselves and say like, "Okay. It says that you can't do this in the policy. Why? Is there a legitimate reason? Is this reason something that's actually helping people or is this something that's actually hurting people?" And it's worth teaching that to our students and we have more eyes, you know.

> They can catch it too and be like, "Well, why do you have this policy?" "Why does it matter?" And then, we're checking ourselves honestly like too. I mean, like, "What are my thoughts on this?" "Are those like beneficial to us or are they actually detrimental?" And then, for me, it's important because that's why I love teaching. So, like if I don't do that then I don't think I'm going to love it anymore, you know.

Instead of viewing school polices as static, unchangeable systemic forces, Mariela saw oppressive school policies as an opportunity to engage in critical consciousness and praxis with her students. According to Mariela, teachers need to constantly "check" themselves to make sure the rules, policies, traditions they adhere to are not causing more harm than good, and to make sure their personal moral and ethical beliefs about teaching aren't being compromised either. However, beyond just teachers asking these critical questions, Mariela sees the value in teaching students to analyze, critique, and challenge oppressive policies that are impacting their own lives. In doing so, the students are supported by the teacher to critically reflect on their own lives and to take meaningful action to improve their world.

While parents and policies can be unpredictable, they don't need to cause pedagogically paralyzing fear in critical educators. Local communities have a tremendous potential to be positive support systems for student agency and action, but teachers have to be willing to learn from their communities and adapt their methods appropriately. School rules, policies, and traditions can provide opportunities to raise student critical consciousness and engage in reflective action. Understanding academic policies can also develop students' navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) for advancing through an education system that may be unfamiliar to historically marginalized students.

These challenges and fears are not easy to overcome. Critical educators are often benefiters of the education system they want to change. Critical educators also attempt to disrupt other peoples' norms about the education system. It is a difficult, and sometimes lonely, place to be. Catherine's and Mariela's passion for tackling these challenges on behalf of their students is courageous. Plain and simple. Changing an oppressive system of education starts with brave classroom teachers; teachers willing to risk something for the young people in their classroom.

We had spent almost an hour and a half talking about civic action, about the course, and about what laid ahead for both of us. In the immediate, we were both had plans to buy new clothes: Mariela need more professional teaching clothes, and I needed some new ties for an upcoming interview. But long term, we talked about the power of teachers, and how important it was for classroom teachers to do this work and the importance of preparing future teachers to be agents of change. As our conversation slowed and our coffee disappeared, Mariela smiled confidently and said, "If I do break rules—which I probably will—it's on me."

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS

> But this one, it mattered, because I think I'm going to actually use it in the future, you know. And that's how the course was set up. It wasn't, "Do this to get a grade." It was, "Do this and keep it, because it's something that you can use later." –Mariela

He was forty minutes late, and I was about to leave the coffee shop. It had been difficult to pin down a time to do a follow-up interview with David. Unlike the other participants, David was still taking classes at the university and wouldn't be student teaching for another year, so his schedule was a little more difficult to navigate. But as my internal timer was about to runout, he walked through the door, long-hair blowing in the air conditioning.

I was relieved.

Of all the participants, David was the biggest surprise in the semester. As I mentioned earlier, I was unsure of how David would respond over the course of the semester to the readings and discussions. Early on he seemed distracted and disinterested with the class. However, as the course progressed, David began to shine. I was relieved at his arrival, because I wanted to know what caused such an observable growth in his development as a teacher.

A month after the end of class, in our follow-up interview, I asked David what from the course influenced his civic action unit design, and his response was simply, "It was actually the assignment itself." Although David described his civic action unit as a

"rip-off" of the civic action unit project I assigned, the only aspects he "ripped off" were that the topics where student selected, and that the final product was actionable.

I reassured David that he hadn't ripped me off, instead we could just call it "modeled after."

In each follow-up interview, I asked the pre-service teachers, "Before my class, had you ever been asked to design a civic action or social justice unit?" Every participant, some cutting me off before I finished my question, responded with "Nope, never" or emphatic head shakes. I probed, "Why do you think that is?" Some speculated that fear was the reason why their instructors and professors avoided encouraging such units. A high level of risk is associated with social justice or civic action work. Anytime someone challenges norms or power structures they open themselves up for attack. Others speculated it was because other instructors and professors hadn't actually done civic action or social justice work as classroom teachers, and therefore they did not feel that it was necessary to teach.

However, this work is necessary for sustaining our ever-growing pluralistic society (Alim & Paris, 2017) and protecting our democracy (Giroux, 2011). Now, more than ever, we need teacher educators and teachers who are willing to overcome their fears and venture into the unknown to develop critical students who work to make society a fairer and more equitable place for all people.

The purpose of this study was to understand how pre-service teachers apply and adapt critical pedagogies and navigate systemic forces when designing civic action units. However, due to the situated nature of critical pedagogies, this process of applying and

adapting and navigating took time and a venturing into the unknown by me, their teacher and the researcher. In the following pages, I explore some implications for teacher education from this study.

Course Design

When I designed the course, I was intentional in providing students consciousness-raising texts and pairing those texts with practical application texts. Instead of providing pre-service teachers with more decontextualized examples of application, I wanted the pre-service teachers to have an understanding of *why* certain methods and practices are beneficial for different students and communities. The civic action unit project not only served as a final assessment of the pre-service teachers, but it also assessed whether or not the courses' commitment to teaching critical pedagogies and engaging pre-service teachers in sustained critical dialogue resulted in any impactful change.

Going Slow to Go Fast

I knew that approaching methods by starting with a heavy approach to critical pedagogy would feel slow to students. Drawing from my days as a high school football coach, I often reminded the class in those early weeks that we "had to go slow, to go fast." Meaning, before we could jump into designing for civic action, we first had to go slow in developing our understanding of the context and theory behind these different approaches to English education. Foundationally, we had to question why is school done the way that it is, and why are diverse perspectives not often included in traditional

English classrooms. We also needed to understand and recognize that our students bring more knowledge to the classroom than they're often credited for.

This was a difficult process to facilitate, but absolutely necessary for the participant's success in designing their civic action units. There were many nights, as I walked to my car after class, where I would wonder if what I was trying to do was actually going to work. Was I aiming too high for my pre-service teacher who still had very little experience with students and classrooms as teachers? After all, my own transformative experience with these readings did not occur until graduate school, and when I had my own classroom to frame what I was learning.

In the middle of all this uncertainty, the signs of the progress that I had been waiting for began to show. During the fifth week of semester, the class participated in a silent discussion on Miller's (2015) "A Queer Literacy Framework Promoting (A)Gender and (A)Sexuality Self-Determination and Justice." In the discussion, there were two sets of printed excerpts from the article posted around the room (see Appendix E), and, in two groups, the students wrote responses and replies using post-it notes. Then they switched sides of the room to "hear" what the other group "discussed" with the same quotes. I used the silent discussion format to start our discussion of a Queer Literacy Framework and to prepare myself for the whole class discussion that was to follow. Since I am an outsider of the LGBTQ+ community, I needed the time to process through how students were responding and how I would address questions, concerns, or the potential issues in ways that were appropriate for my positionality as a cis-gender, heterosexual person.

As I walked around and read students' post-it notes, one stood out and reassured me that the process of "going slow to go fast" was working. For example, a conservative student wrote one post-it, "While I don't agree we this, I think every student should feel represented in the curriculum."

Progress.

Although that student may not go on to teach an LGTBQ-themed novel in their future classroom, the fact that they believe *all* students deserve to see themselves in the curriculum was a huge first step. A step that deserves to be celebrated. Whenever teachers critically reflect on their personal beliefs and recognize how those beliefs impact students there is the potential for progress to be made in how that teacher responds or works with their students.

The pre-service teachers were also encouraged to explore the ways in which they were growing or being challenged in their weekly reflections. This allowed students to share their thoughts with me without having to share their processing with their peers. For example, another student shared in her reflection that she was conservative, and she did not agree with everything that was beginning shared and discussed by her peers in class. In the beginning, she did not understand the point of learning about these different critical pedagogies if the school she wanted to teach at would not be receptive of these approaches. But as the semester progressed, she began to make connections between what we were reading and discussing in class to her own life. She shared a recent experience with her mother, who is Hispanic and bilingual, in which someone spoke to her mother as if she did not speak English. From this experience, the pre-service teacher

recognized that people were making racially charged assumptions about her mother's abilities language abilities, much like how schools and teachers sometimes make racially charged assumptions about students' knowledge, experiences, and abilities.

For teacher educators, it is important to resist the urge to seek immediate confirmation of our course design. As a teacher, I often want to see students pick up the "material" quickly and be ready to apply it to their work. But what does that look like when the material isn't about a sentence structure or a vocab word? Critical pedagogies for the ELA classroom are not simple "plug and play" strategies. They take time. Often, these critical pedagogies challenge beliefs resulting in paradigm shifts for teachers who have found educational success through traditional methods of teaching and learning. To disrupt those traditional methods, we need to take time to thoroughly lay out the case for the shift. Like I said to my students, teacher educators need to go slow, to go fast. The pace of the shift is different for all pre-service teachers. The socio-cultural, socio-historical experiences of pre-service teachers will influence their shift, but teacher educators can support all of their pre-service teachers by celebrating their growth.

Scaffolding Through Projects

During the first iteration of this course the previous semester, the civic action unit was done during the middle of the semester, when students read chapter 3 in *Pose, Wobble, Flow* (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015) which discusses the importance of civic action units in an ELA classroom. Then the students in that course participated in a young adult (YA) book group at the end of the semester drawing from the course readings on culturally sustaining pedagogy (Alim & Paris, 2017) and culturally proactive teaching

(Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015) to understand how an LGBTQ-themed YA novel could inform pre-service teachers' understanding of this underrepresented group and the issues the LGBTQ+ community faces in school and society (Durand, 2015). However, this original organization of the course projects made it difficult for students to draw connections between the types of civic action they had learned about and designed, and how YA novels could help facilitate that work. Through the reorganization of the course, each project built off the previous projects to increase student awareness, confidence, and agency to design their civic action units.

In the course redesign, I moved the civic action unit to the end of the semester and moved the YA book group project to the middle. This switch helped students to connect the critical pedagogies we had been discussing to literature, often the primary curriculum driver in an English course, and then design their civic action units as their final project in the course. For example, in Catherine's civic action unit, she designed her students to build from a student choice YA book group in which students discussed different social issues in the books. Also, Mariela designed her unit to use a YA novel, *All-American Boys,* to facilitate discussions on how to be allies of oppressed groups and movements.

When I asked Mariela, what other projects or activities from the course helped in her design of her civic action unit she said:

> Mariela: I love the book study like the young adult book study. That was like one of my favorite things we did. As you know, I was not the biggest fan of the book. However, like I really loved talking to my peers about it. And I loved talking about like our reactions as readers and then how we would teach it as teachers. Like reading the text through those two lenses was really cool.
>
> A: How did it help you with your civic action unit?

> Mariela: Well, for one, the book was related to police brutality and things like that. So, like it was a good lead-in, because it reminded me how much that matters to me and how important that is. And too, it reminded me of like reading it and talking about our reactions to the actual book reminded me a lot of like when I was a student and what I would've wanted from my teacher—like what guidelines versus what freedoms and how important like literature is in discussing difficult topics.

For Mariela, the YA novel project did not just provide fodder for designing her civic action unit, but it also made her think about *how* she might teach using a socially consciousness YA novel. The YA novel book group also showed David that teachers and students are capable of having discussions on these kinds of difficult topics. According to David, using, "young adult literature that was like politically charged or... that [has] graphic content could be really useful and helpful to get across issues to students who might have trouble like getting them on a broader scale."

When I asked Mariela and David whether or not they would have designed the civic action unit the same way if they had not participated in the YA book groups. Mariela answered:

> I don't think so… it helped a lot in having like almost the courage to do something like this because like when we first started this class, I would've given you the dumbest unit on grammar, or like some writing five paragraphs, or some stupid thing. But the course was set up in a way that like at the end you felt the need to break out of the box and do something different.

By experiencing and participating in the YA book group, Mariela was given the courage and confidence to design a unit around her passions. This helped her break out of her pedagogical comfort zone and try something new. Something she had not been asked to do in her previous undergraduate experience.

David recognized the scaffolding that occurred over the course of the semester through the research project, YA book group, and civic action unit. According to David, "I feel like by that point in the class, I had all this build-up, and it got to this like boiling point of like what are you doing? What's your plan?" For David, being asked to design a civic action unit was not just a standalone project, but a logical next step in the process. That "boiling point" David describes represents the raising of critical consciousness in the pre-service teachers through the course readings and design. David reached a point where what he observed and saw lacking in education and society required action, or praxis (Freire, 1970).

In my first iteration of this course, I designed four projects that I thought were valuable on their own: the research project, the civic action unit, the position statement, and the YA book group. Although each of these projects were important and valuable, they nevertheless were disjointed. I needed to reevaluate the purpose of the projects and how they can best support the work of the others. The research project at the beginning provided time for the course to develop through the early build-up. It also provided students with a professional resource to support their teaching later on in the course and in their careers. I switched the civic action unit and the YA book group for the reasons described above, and I removed the position statement project. The position statement project was designed to give the pre-service teachers an opportunity to take all that they have learned and express their new or renewed positions on some of the topics learned about and discussed over the course of the semester. This summative assignment was intended to give the pre-service teachers to showcase their knowledge, however, it was

still just a written statement as opposed to an actionable product. I wanted the course to end with an actionable product, so when the pre-service teachers left the class they were thinking about and work toward action.

Engaging in Dialogue

At the beginning of the semester, I asked my pre-service teachers to provide some basic information about themselves: preferred name, preferred pronouns, hometown, and a list of topics they could talk about for thirty minutes with no prep time. However, I also asked them to share with me what they want to learn more about in the class. I call it the No Bad Questions Survey, and the questions from the survey were:

What instructional or teaching practices do you want to learn more about?

What would you like to practice more?

What makes you nervous when you think about teaching?

What do you want to know more about professionally?

How would you like this class to better prepare you for teaching?

While I was unable to address all of the topics generated by my pre-service teachers, I was able to design class discussion time to address some of the biggest needs shared by the students. When we had some spare time in the class, I took time to share about my experience with some of their concerns. We talked about how to write effective writing prompts, how to backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) a unit calendar, how to write lesson plans, and I shared stories about the different ethical decisions I was faced with as a teacher.

By sharing of stories, the good and the bad, I modeled for my pre-service teachers how to be vulnerable as a teacher and how that vulnerability can facilitate learning. I never pretended to have all the answers for the challenges they experienced, but I could share my stories to engage in a critical discussion about different possibilities. This dialogic process positioned my pre-service teachers and myself as collaborators in our learning, responding to everyone's contributions and ideas with empathy, humility, and love. As opposed to an anti-dialogue positioning in which I was the ultimate judge of what was valid and what counted (Freire, 1974). When asked why more teacher educators don't assign social justice-oriented projects to pre-service teachers, Kristin responded:

> I just think teachers are afraid. I think they get afraid that they don't know. They won't know how to control it. They won't know how to dictate it. They won't know how to put their own personal bias in there without it being forced upon us as opposed to like you did when you were a part of our class community. Like you made it a point to share your experiences, too, which made us like get closer in class.

For Kristin, the stories I shared about how I handled some of things they were afraid of when I was an early career high school teacher showed built a classroom community in which it was okay to make mistakes as long as we learned from them and grow. I shared stories like when I snapped at a student and apologized after class, or when I agreed to teach *Othello* that would have hegemonic gender norms and had to reverse course in front of my students as soon as I realized what I was actually saying. I showed my pre-service teachers that I was not perfect, and that I was still learning and unlearning different aspects of my teaching.

The pre-service teachers in this study also benefited from the freedom to design the civic action unit that would be meaningful to them and useful in their future classrooms. This process sometimes took time and long conversations. Kristin, Mariela, and Catherine stayed after class on different nights to flesh out their ideas, to be heard, and to receive some feedback. Our conversations were anywhere form 30-50 minutes in length, because it was a collaborative process of work through their ideas and concerns. Beyond the basic requirements, the pre-service teachers had to decide many of the aspects of their units such as the calendar time frame, the template for the lesson plan, and the final assignment for their unit.

Engaging in this dialogue positioned the pre-service teachers as the primary decision makers for their units–for their future classrooms. The project became more than an assignment that needed to be completed for a grade, it became, for many of them, their first exercise in being an autonomous teacher. Each of the participants said they wanted to use their civic action units in a future class, and, more importantly, they all had ideas and plans to revise their units further now that the pressure of a due date was gone.

Future Research

One of the limits of this study is that the civic action units designed by the pre-service teacher were not implemented into their classrooms. The units were designed for hypothetical contexts and imagined students. Therefore, in a future follow-up study, I plan to contact the participants and conduct a focus group interview with them one, two, and three years after they graduate and have started teaching.

With this focus group study, I want to understand how having a classroom with their own unique students, communities, and school culture has influenced their passion to be critical pedagogues. The focus group setting will allow for the participants to share stories and potentially support each other through challenges. Also, by approaching the interviews in as a more casual conversation, the participants will feel less pressure to have the "right" answers like they might in a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

This study will provide insight into the long-term effects of the course, as well as potentially identify other systemic forces that early career critical pedagogues encounter. With these findings, English educators can better design methods courses to have a long-term impact on teacher practice and to prepare early career teachers for challenges.

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APPENDIX A

COURSE CALENDAR

Class	Daily Plans	Reading/Homework
8/22	Topic: Welcome and Overview Syllabus Review Heart Maps (Heard) introductions Education Reflections "No Bad Questions" Survey	Read: Chapter 2, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) Homework: Submit Introduction discussion board and responses by 8/26 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
8/27	Topic: Critical Pedagogy Quick Write Discuss Reading PhotoVoice activity	Read: *Pose, Wobble, and Flow* (*PWF*): Intro Homework: Submit PhotoVoice activity to Canvas by 10/29
8/29	Topic: Growing Professionally Introduce Project 1: Exploring Professional Communities How to Access NCTE Journals through the ASU Library Brainstorm Project 1 Topics	Read: "What Is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Why Does It Matter?" (Alim and Paris, 2017) Homework: Weekly Reflection 1 due 9/1 Comment on two PhotoVoice Submissions Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/3	Topic: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Quick Write Discuss Reading "What are we seeking to sustain?" Activity	Read: *PWF:* Chap 1 Homework: Submit Project 1 Proposals to Canvas by 9/4 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/5	Topic: Praxis and Critical Consciousness Quick Write Discuss Reading Collaborate on Project 1	Read: "Critical English Education" (Morrell, 2005) Homework: Weekly Reflection 2 due 9/8 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/10	Topic: Praxis and Critical Consciousness	Read:

	Quick Write Discuss Reading Planning for a Critical English Education	"Embracing Change: Teaching in a Multicultural World" (hooks, 1994) Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/12	Topic: Praxis and Critical Consciousness Quick Write Discuss Reading #NCTEchat (http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2017/06/join-nctechat/)	Read: "A Queer Literacy Framework Promoting (A)Gender and (A)Sexuality Self-Determination and Justice" (Miller, 2015) Homework: Participate in #NCTEchat on Sunday Sept. 15 starting at 5 pm. Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/17	Topic: Queer Literacy Framework Quick Write Discussion Reading Assign Project 1 Panel Presentation Groups	Read: *PWF:* Chap 2 Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/19	Topic: Hacking ELA and Vulnerable Teaching Quick Write Discuss Reading Work with Project 1 Panel Presentation groups	Read: "Is It Time to Abandon the Idea of 'Best Practices' in the Teaching of English?" (Smagorinsky, 2009) Homework: Weekly Reflection 3 due 9/22 Project 1 due to Canvas by 9/23 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/24	Topic: Best Practices Quick Write Discuss Reading Group 1 Panel Presentation	Read: "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching" (Moll et al., 1992) Homework: Complete Discussion Board Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
9/26	Topic: Asset Pedagogy Group 2 Panel Presentation	Read:

	Discuss Reading Introduce Project 2	"'For Us, By Us': A Vision for Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies Forwarded by Latinx Youth" (Irizarry, 2017) Homework: Weekly Reflection 4 due 9/29 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
10/1	Topic: Asset Pedagogy Quick Write Discuss Readings Group 3 Panel Presentation	Read: *PWF:* Chapter 4 Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading Submit Project 2 Surveys by 10/2
10/3	Topic: Embracing Your Inner Writer Quick Write Discuss Reading Group 4 Panel Presentation Announce Project 2 Groups	Read: "Becoming Your Own Expert–Teachers as Writers" (Gillespie, 1985) "Unleashing the Power of Youth Spoken Word" (Celaya, 2019) Homework: Weekly Reflection 5 due 10/6 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on readings
10/8	Topic: Youth Spoken Word Poetry Quick Write Discuss Readings Group 5 Panel Presentation	Read: *PWF:* Chap 5 Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
10/10	Topic: Rethinking Reading Discuss reading Group 6 Panel Presentation	Read: "'This Stuff Interests Me': Re-Centering Indigenous Paradigms in Colonizing Schooling Spaces" (San Pedro, 2017) Read section 1 of your Project 2 book Homework: Weekly Reflection 6 due 10/13 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading

10/15	NO SCHOOL: October Break	
10/17	Topic: Re-Centering Literature Discuss Reading YA Book Group Discussions	Read: "Young Adult Literature and Classroom-Based Research" (Ivey, 2017) Read section 2 of your Project 2 book Homework: Participate in #NCTEchat on Sunday, Oct. 20th starting at 5 pm
10/22	Topic: Leisure Reading Discuss Reading YA Book Group Discussions	Read: Read section 3 of your project 2 book Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the readings
10/24	Topic: Reading Groups YA Book Group Discussions Work on Project 2 Presentations Introduce Project 3	Read: *PWF:* Chapter 3 Homework: Weekly Reflection 7 due 10/27 Project 2 due to Canvas by 10/28 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
10/29	Topic: Literacy as Civic Action Discuss Reading Book Groups 1 & 2 Presentations Brainstorm for Project 3	Read: "Revolutionizing Inquiry in Urban English Classrooms: Pursuing Voice and Justice through Youth Participatory Action Research" (Mirra, Filipiak, and Garcia, 2015) Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading Submit Project 3 Proposal to Canvas by 10/30
10/31	Topic: Youth Participatory Action Research Quick Write Book Groups 3 & 4 Presentations Discuss Reading	Read: "From Passion to Action: How School Contributes to Student Agency" (Celaya, 2018) Homework: • Weekly Reflection 8 due 11/3

11/5	Topic: Student Agency Discuss Reading Book Groups 5 & 6 Presentations Collaborate for Project 3	Read: "The stories they tell: Mainstream media, pedagogies of healing, and critical media literacy" (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, & Everett, 2017) Homework: Bring 3 resources to share based on your research
11/7	Topic: Designing Civic Action Units Share three resources Collaborate for Project 3	Read: *PWF:* Chapter 6 Homework: Weekly Reflection 9 due 11/10 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
11/12	Topic: Classroom Spaces Quick Write Discuss Reading Designing classroom spaces activity	Read: "Acquiescence, Accommodation, and Resistance" (Smagorinsky, 2002) Homework: Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
11/14	Topic: Acquiescence, Accommodation, and Resistance Quick Write Discuss Reading Acquiescence, Accommodation, and Resistance in practice	Read: *PWF:* Conclusion Homework: Weekly Reflection 10 due 11/17 Bring 3 questions/ideas/resources for discussion based on the reading
11/19	Topic: Teaching for a More Just Future Project 3 Poster Presentations Discuss Reading Introduce Project 4	Read: "A Call for Healing Teachers" (Garcia, 2019) Homework: Complete Canvas discussion board
11/21	ONLINE CLASS: Self-Care Participate in Canvas discussion board on reading	Read: Review your work and learning from the semester Homework: Online Peer Feedback
11/26	ONLINE CLASS: Project 4 Review your work and learning this past semester	Homework: Submit Project 3 to Canvas by 12/2

11/28	NO SCHOOL: Thanksgiving Break	
12/3-5	Topic: Final Presentations Project 3 Presentations	Have a great winter break!

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE PROJECTS

Project 1: Exploring Professional Organizations

Teaching can often be a lonely practice, especially for early career teachers who find themselves in an over-regulated and unresponsive educational system. As corporations and politicians work to de-professionalize education, it is imperative for teachers to be familiar with the professional communities and resources available to them. In this project, you will explore one of the biggest professional organizations available to ELA teachers, The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). You will research a topic of personal interest using the journals and resources available from NCTE. Then, you will synthesize your research and design relevant educational materials supported by your research. Finally, using a conference panel presentation format, you will be partnered with other students with similar research interests. Together, you will present your work to your classmates sharing your research, designed materials, and experiences.

Required elements: 1) Submit proposal to Canvas discussion board for feedback, 2) Synthesis of research with works cited, 3) Three educational materials informed by your research, 4) Panel presentation

Project 2: Using Young Adult Literature to Promote Critical Consciousness

After reviewing empirical research on young adult literature, Ivey (2017) argues that, "prioritizing young adult literature in classrooms makes sense if we want to influence achievement. To stop there, however, would be to create a cascade of missed opportunities" (p. 349). In this project, you will read a contemporary young adult novel,

and participate in small group discussions with your classmates. Not only will you be asked to discuss the novel itself (much like your future students), but you'll be asked to contextualize the novel and your discussions in relation to your positionality as a future teacher. Meaning, you will read the novel as both a student engaging with literature, and as a teacher curating (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015, Chapter 5) content and themes for students.

Required elements: 1) Participation in YA book group, 2) Group presentation 3) Teaching resources for your peers

Project 3: Civic Action Unit

Civics has long been viewed as the responsibility of social studies departments. However, as Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015) argue, "Enacting literacy is a civic action. We compel, we advocate, we comply through the words we wield. Just as importantly, our civic pathways are stifled if we do not know how to articulate our social needs or are silent" (p. 58). If we want classrooms to be critical spaces for student agency, then we must design opportunities for students to apply their literacies beyond our classroom walls. When designing your civic action unit, keep in mind that critical English classrooms, "develop in young [people] skills to deconstruct dominant texts carefully (i.e., canonical literature, media texts) while also instructing them in skills that allow them to create their own critical texts that can be used in the struggle for social justice"

(Morrell, 2005). In chapter 3 of Pose, Wobble, Flow (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015), the authors provide some questions for teachers to consider during this design process:

- Is your intended lesson one that allows youth to engage critically with the world as they experience it today?
- Is your curriculum framed to invite dialogue and encourage opportunities for dissent?
- Are the expected, assessable outcomes of your instruction applicable to engaging civically? How do you know? (p. 66)

Your civic action unit plan will need to be grounded and supported in relevant research, including class readings and outside research. Students are encouraged to collaborate with others for this project.

Required elements: 1) Submit proposal to Canvas discussion board for feedback, 2) Unit calendar, 3) Four key lesson plans, 5) Written rationale of unit with works cited, 6) Poster presentation with handouts

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Name: _____

Demographic Survey

Directions

Please answer the following questions. Answering these questions is completely voluntary. You may skip any or all of the questions. You can amend or redact your answers at any time.

1. What is your age? _____

2. To which gender identity do you most identify? _____

3. What are your preferred pronouns? Circle one or fill in the blank:

he/him/his she/her/hers they/them/theirs it changes _____

4. What is your ethnicity? _____

5. What is your sexuality?

_____

6. Which of the following best describes your socio-economic status? Circle one:

Lower class Working class Middle class Upper-middle class Upper class

7. In which locale(s) did you spend your youth? Circle all of those appropriate:

Urban Suburban Rural

APPENDIX D

LESSON PLAN EXAMPLES

Mr. Celaya's Sophomore English

Date: September 3rd, 2013

Standards
9-10.RI.1

Objective
Students will analyze the author's claim and evidence or support.

Sub-objectives
Students will apply critical reading strategies
Students will discuss their findings with the class

Key Vocabulary
This week's vocab words from the article; discrete, prudence, dithering, embolden, impasse, sectarian, tepid, haven

Materials
Copies of the article, "Forcing Obama's Hand in Syria" from the New York Times
Copies of vocab word chart for the week

Topic: Hot Topic Tuesday
Level: Analyze
Assessment: Students will Critically Read and Discuss Hot Topic

Opening/Warm-up
Remind students of picture day, hand out any packets to those students who were absent
Review our first set of critical reading strategies (Number Paragraphs, Underline Claim, and Bracket Evidence)
Pass out Article

Activity
Students will take 15 minutes to read and mark the text. Teacher will walk around to monitor student's progress. Give an additional 5 minutes to those students who still need time.

After students have finished the article, students will be put into groups of 3 - 5 depending on the class size, to compare their claims and evidence. Teacher will go to each group to check their answers. This should take about 10 minutes.

The class will then be opened up for discussion about the article, whether they agree or disagree and what evidence from the article can they cite or refute.

Closure/Assessment
Students assessed on their markings, ability to find the author's claim, and their ability to discuss the article.

Homework
Students will use the pre-underlined words from the article to fill out their vocab sheet

English 10th/11th	AZCCRS: 10.RI.1, 10.RI.4	Lesson Title: Intro to Othello and Shakespeare
Agenda: Read, Intro to Othello, Read and Annotate articles, Write a summary for each article		
Resources: Copies of "William Shakespeare" by Robert Butler from *Intelligent Life*, "Shakespeare matters - and that means his words" by Susan Elkin, and "Why is Othello Black?" by Isaac Butler.		
Anticipatory Set: Introduce Shakespeare's Othello and the topics of the articles and their relation to our reading.		
Procedure: Invite students to read for 10-15 minutes. Introduce Othello, talk about the character, the type of play, why it matters. Share about each article, what type of article, reasons for picking each piece. Pass out articles, students will need a separate piece of paper for their three summaries. Due tomorrow.		
W- What activities will include writing? Students will write summaries for each article		
I- What activities will include inquiry? Students will look up definitions and write questions in the margins as they annotate.		
C- What activities will include collaboration?		
O- How did you address organization? Students will number the paragraphs, circle keywords and phrases and define them, bracket evidence, and write in the margins. Students will write clear, and well-organized summary paragraphs for each article.		
R- What activities will include reading? Students will read three non-fiction, informational texts. One biographical/analytical, one argument, and one explanatory.		
Notes:		

APPENDIX E

QUEER LITERACY FRAMEWORK SILENT DISCUSSION QUOTES

“Adolescent culture today teaches us that some youth eschew gender and sexual labels. Faced with these realities, teachers are challenged to mediate literacy learning that affirms these differential realities in their classrooms” (Miller, 2015, p. 37).

“The norm polices and inhibits internal freedom. This is not to say that those who live outside the norm and have come to accept their lived realities suffer, but it does suggest that there are often psychic, emotional, political, economic, and sometimes physical consequences” (p. 39).

“In the classroom, optimal conditions that make self-determination possible include activities that foster independence, agency, integrity, an adequate range of options, and that authenticate cultural identity” (p. 40).

“If we ascribe to a recurrence of sameness, it creates a flattening and unidimensional perspective of gender and sexuality, while it continues to delegitimize those who do not ascribe to gender and sexuality norms by relegating them to ongoing inferior status” (p. 41).

“For students who are LGBT*IAGCQ and have differential bodied realties, schools are not just unsafe, they are restrictive, constrictive, and reinforcers of multiple forms of systemic oppression” (p. 39)

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

EXEMPTION GRANTED

James Blasingame
CLAS-H: English
000000000
James.Blasingame@asu.edu

Dear James Blasingame:

On 10/17/2019 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Preservice Teachers Engaging with Critical Pedagogies and Designing Civic Action Units
Investigator:	James Blasingame
IRB ID:	STUDY00010824
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Recruitment Script.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Dis Demographic Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Dis Informed Consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Critical Pedagogies IRB.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings on 10/17/2019.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Anthony Celaya
Anthony Celaya