HE’S TOO YOUNG TO LEARN ABOUT THAT STUFF: AN EXAMINATION OF CRITICAL, ANTI-RACIST PEDAGOGY IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

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By

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Critical multicultural theorists (i.e., Banks, 1994; Derman-Sparks, 1993; Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa, 1998) call for early childhood teachers to utilize critical and anti-racist approaches in their classrooms as a means of identifying, resisting, and ultimately eliminating racist structures within schools. Giving pensive consideration to this call, the purpose of this critical action research study is to examine my teaching experiences while teaching critically about African American history through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy. The overarching research question that drives this research is: How does teaching critically about African American history influence the perspectives and understandings in my 1st grade classroom?

This study is informed by both qualitative and teacher research paradigms and employs a critical action research methodology (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998). More specifically, as the teacher/research in this study, I developed and implemented a 9-lesson unit on African American history in my classroom based in critical, anti-racist perspectives. Data was collected through self-observations, field notes, teacher researcher journal entries, and student documents.

Data analyses yield two important broad findings. First, dialogue operated and was used in various ways to contribute to what I call ‘critical racial consciousness’ in and among the students in my classroom. Second, multiple tensions as I engaged with the
curriculum, students, and parents throughout the duration of the study. Further, implications for early childhood practice and teacher education are discussed, along with recommendations for future research in this area.
Dedicated to my grandfathers James and Lewis
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VITA

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘We just need something quick and easy teachers can do…’

How did I get here? I can still remember that evening riding home from class. It was a mid-October evening. I had just finished class for the night and I was a bit overwhelmed by our class discussion of Freire’s (1972) notion of Praxis. Action in reflection…I couldn’t help but to be challenged by the notion that theory and practice should be one. I thought about how commonsense this idea seemed to me. I kept wondering why Praxis (action in reflection or reflection in action) did not occur more often in schooling contexts—particularly as it relates to issues of multicultural education, diversity, and equity. When I arrived at school that morning, I went to my mailbox to gather my daily classroom attendance forms as usual. Ms. Williams, our Principal, greeted me and reminded me that we were scheduled to meet with the multicultural committee during lunch to discuss the tentative schedule of events for that year. Being an African American Women, I was certain that she would encourage teachers to move beyond a “Heroes and Holidays” (Lee, Mankart, & Okazaway, 1998) approach to multicultural education. During the meeting Ms. Williams introduced and discussed a series of packets containing pictures of chief and familiar multicultural figures (i.e.,
Native American, Asian American, African American, etc.) for teachers to use in their classrooms. The packets contained poor caricatures of figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Christopher Columbus, and Betsy Ross, accompanied by brief excerpts of texts. Mixed with both outrage and passion, I offered Bank’s (1994) typology of 5 approaches to multicultural education. I went on to explain Sleeter and Grant’s (1994) ideas of multicultural education that is social reconstructionist. As usual, my colleagues reacted with several disgruntle and offended stairs. When I was finished speaking one colleague responded, “No offense Terry, but now is not the time for all of your deep multicultural theories. We just need something quick and easy that teachers can do to be multicultural. We don’t have to change the world! Besides, it is hard enough to focus on everything else that is in the curriculum guides.” So, there it was/is. As Apple (1993) suggests, there was the issue of the formal standardized curriculum dictating what would or would not be taught in schools and classrooms by virtue of what would or would not be tests. And, there was the secondary issue of multicultural education as a superficial practice that does little to transform either the students or teachers involved. Leaving the meeting frustrated, I wondered why it was so difficult for teachers to think about multicultural education in critical and reflective ways. Why do so many teachers voluntarily surrender their power to affect change in the lives of their students to testing and curriculum mandates? Perhaps, these teachers bought into what Freire (1972) calls the ‘culture of silence’ and have begun to see themselves in the same way that those in the dominant culture sees them—that is, powerless!

Over the next few months and courses within my Ph.D. program, I constantly thought about these issues of praxis, curriculum domination, teacher activism, and
powerlessness. I thought about how these theories would or would not be useful in ‘real’ classrooms with ‘real’ teachers, given the institutional pressures, constraints, insecurities and fears that most teachers endure on a daily basis. Near the end of my coursework, I encountered Lee, Menkart, and Okazawa-Rey’s (1998) work around anti-racist, multicultural education in K-12 settings and professional development communities. For me, this book served as both a model and source of inspiration for critical multicultural education in authentic k-12 contexts. It was through further critical reflection that I began to think about what critical anti-racist multicultural education would look like in early childhood settings in general and in my 1st grade classroom in particular. How do we teach children about race/culture in ways that are developmentally appropriate, non-essentialist, and yet still critical? It was here that I began to think about my dissertation study as an opportunity to inquire further about this issue.

Statement of the Problem

Recent statistics from the NCES (2000) report that student demographics in early childhood classrooms are becoming increasingly racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse. However, Ramsey (2004) points out that an overwhelmingly large number of early childhood educators do not make conscious efforts to integrate culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse perspectives into the existing early childhood curriculum for at least two major reasons. First, many early childhood educators believe that discussions of race and racial injustice should be introduced during the later portion of the elementary school years where children are better suited to understand and respond to these issues. Second, the field of early childhood education lacks a clear, connected, and
developmentally appropriate approach to teaching and learning about issues of race and racial oppression.

Yet and still, in many of the early childhood classrooms where multicultural perspectives are infused into the early childhood curriculum, Jones and Derman-Sparks (1992) inform us that these efforts tend to focus on superficial, “tolerant”, and contributive approaches to curriculum and pedagogy that do little to transform the curriculum, teachers, and or children involved. Because racial oppression is so deeply imbedded within many of the ‘normal’ and taken for granted schooling processes, critical multiculturalists (i.e., Banks, 1985, Derman-Sparks, 1998; Kalin, 2002; Lee, Menkart, Okazawa-Rey, 1998; Nieto, 2000) argue for the infusion of critical, anti-racist, and transformative approaches to education that aid students in developing increased levels of consciousness related to the ways in which racial oppression operates in both schools and society.

Purpose of the Study

Because so few early childhood teachers engage in critical and anti-racist forms of pedagogical practices, (i.e., Derman-Sparks, 1993; Paley, 1995), there has been little documented relative to early childhood teachers’ experiences while engaging critical and anti-racist pedagogies. Thus, the overarching purpose of this qualitative inquiry is to examine my teaching experiences, as a 1st grade teacher, teaching critically about African American history in my 1st grade classroom through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy.
Research Questions

The overarching research question that drives this research is: How does teaching critically about African American history influence the perspectives and understandings in my 1st grade classroom? Other more specific questions include:

1. What is the nature of critical, anti-racist pedagogy in this early childhood classroom?

2. What instructional challenges and changes occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

3. What developmental challenges and changes in and among my students occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

4. What personal/political challenges occur as I teach critically about African American history?

5. What pragmatic challenges and changes (i.e., classroom, institutional etc.) occur as I teach critically about African American history?

Significance of this Study

This study is significant for at least two reasons. First, because this study exists as a first hand account of my own teaching experiences while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy in an early childhood classroom, it will potentially yield understandings and results that otherwise may not be available from other more traditional forms of “outsider” qualitative inquiry. Second, with its emphasis on drama, this inquiry will
expand the current theoretical and practical knowledge related to the use of drama as a critical and anti-racist pedagogical tool.

Definition of Terms

Race

For the purposes of this study, I draw from Omi and Winant’s (1993) definition of race as a socially constructed category, with no scientific basis, that is used to categorize people into distinctive groups on the basis of observable physical characteristics. In this sense, as Omi and Winant further point out, race can be thought of as an illusion or myth used to meet or advance political and or ideological needs. Further, while the concept of race is illusionary in nature, it has become a material force in peoples’ consciousness due to its long perception as an objective fact.

Racism

For the purposes of this study I draw from the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) and Derman-Sparks (1989) definition of racism. They define racism as”

Any attitude, action, or institutional practice backed up by institutional power that subordinates people because of their color. This includes the imposition of one’s ethnic group’s culture in such a way as to withhold respect for, to demean, or to destroy the cultures of other races (p. 9).
The chief point here is that racism is more than a negative idea or action toward another group of people, instead these ideas or action are backed by institutional power. To this end, then, a distinction exists between racism and racial prejudice. While it is possible for all racial groups to have racial prejudice, racism is almost exclusively linked to Whites; in that, few institutions in the United States back or support the racial prejudice of diverse groups. In like manner, Nieto (2000) argues that schools are racist, because they are structured and function in ways that privilege White students over students of color through many of their normal and systemic processes (i.e., curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, etc.). Further, as Nieto argues, I assume that racism exists within the school social studies curriculum because representation is not given for people of color and Whites.

Critical, anti-racist pedagogy

Critical, anti-racist pedagogy, as used in this study, draws from two forms of pedagogical practice: critical pedagogy and anti-racist pedagogy. While varied notions of critical pedagogy exist (i.e., Apple, 1993; Darder, 1991; McLaren, 1989), for the purposes of this study, I draw from Freire’s (1972) notion of critical pedagogy. In short, Freire (1972) defines critical pedagogy as pedagogy that centers on: 1) problem-posing; 2) critique; 3) reflection; 4) mutually participative dialogic interactions between students and teachers; 5) dialectical notions of human reality; and 6) critical reflection/consciousness in action (Praxis).

This study also draws from the theoretical tenets of anti-racist pedagogy. As with critical pedagogy, multiple and varied definitions of anti-racist pedagogy exists in the
literature (i.e., Derman-Sparks, 1993; Kalin, 2002; Lee, Menkart & Okazawa-Rey, 1998; Nieto, 2000). For the purposes of this study, I draw from Kalin’s (2002) definition of anti-racist pedagogy. In short, Kalin (2002) outlines four distinctive features of anti-racist education from other critical forms of multicultural education. First, anti-racist education employs a racial and economic critique of knowledge(s) and perspectives presented in school settings as a means of deconstructing and (re)constructing existing oppressive knowledge bases, perspectives, and paradigms. Second, anti-racist pedagogy is explicitly political in nature. That is, this form of pedagogy is open or explicit about its oppositional relationship to the dominant knowledge bases, perspectives, and paradigms presented in schools. Third, antiracist education attends to the ways in which gender, class, and race related oppressions are interconnected. A final tenet of anti-racist education is that it leads to or is grounded in some form of social action.

*Drama*

In addition to drawing from theories of critical multicultural education and anti-racist education, this study is framed by theories of educational drama as a form of multicultural pedagogy (i.e. Gay, 1999; Grady, 2000; O’ Neil, 1997) For the purposes of this study, drama does not relate to formal dramatic productions that are commonly associated with Theatre in Education approaches. Instead, drama is defined as a process wherein “…you put yourself into other people’s shoes and, by using personal experiences to help you to understand their point of view, you may discover more than you knew when you started” (Heathcote, 1984, p. 44). In this sense, educational drama can be thought of as using one’s personal experiences, contexts, and worldviews, to
assume other people’s perspectives in order to learn more about either one’s own perspective or the perspective of the person who was dramatized. Essentially educational drama is used in the present study as a form of multicultural pedagogy to aid my students and I in imagining diverse and or alternative perspectives that are often marginalized or excluded within many curricular contexts.

Overview of this Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into 5 chapters. In the present chapter I: 1) provide a contextual background for his study; 2) state the problem being investigated; 3) identify the purpose of this study; 3) list the research questions undergirding this study; 4) establish the significance of this research; and 5) define key terms involved in this study. In chapter 2, I review previous literature related to critical, anti-racist pedagogy in K-12 settings in general and elementary and early childhood contexts in particular. In chapter 3, I discuss the methodology involved in the present study. In chapter 4, I discuss the findings from this research. Finally, in chapter 5, I discuss the implications of this research for early childhood multicultural practice and multicultural teacher education programs. Having provided the overview of this dissertation, I now proceed with a discussion of the relevant literature.
The purpose of this study is to examine my teaching experiences while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy in my 1st grade classroom. Consequently, as both a background and rationale for this study, I review literature related to: a) critical multicultural education; and b) drama as a form of multicultural pedagogy. To better clarify the difference between mainstream and critical approaches to multicultural education as they relate to this study, I begin this review with a brief discussion of mainstream approaches to multicultural education. Next, I review the literature related to critical approaches to multicultural education. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of drama pedagogy as a form of multicultural pedagogy as it relates to this study.

Critical Multicultural Education: From Tolerance to Transformation

*Mainstream Approaches to Multicultural Education*

Since the late 1970’s, proponents of multicultural education have and continue to advocate for multicultural approaches within school curriculum across the U.S as a means of responding to the rapidly and ever changing student demographics (Banks,
Interestingly, much variance exists related to how these ‘multicultural’ approaches should look and exist within schools and classrooms. For example, ‘mainstream multiculturalists’ as McCarthy and Willis (1995) call them, are primarily concerned with students from diverse backgrounds co-existing peaceably with one another. Largely, these theorists and practitioners believe that existing school curricular should be expanded to become more ‘inclusive’ or ‘tolerant’ of works and ideas of people of color as a means of promoting cross-cultural understanding. In addition, mainstream multiculturalists emphasize individual student success within the existing social, political, and economic systems in schools and society. Further, it is assumed that these existing systems are just with regard to people and students of color.

Banks (1993) formally identifies these mainstream multiculturalists as Western traditionalists. Essentially, many of these scholars (i.e, D’Souza, 1991; Gray, 1991; Howe, 1991) believe that knowledge relative to Western history, literature, and culture is of supreme importance and should serve as the lens through which knowledge about other groups is constructed and compared. In this sense, Western epistemologies and knowledge bases are seen as superior to other ways and forms of knowing in the world. Further, this group of scholarship is often seen as being in direct opposition to the fundamental goals of critical multicultural education, because it works to maintain Western ways of viewing and constructing knowledge in P-12 and university settings.

Contrasting mainstream approaches to multicultural education, critical multicultural education is concerned with broader issues of power and difference and how these differences are played out politically (McCarthy & Willis, 1995). Essentially,
critical multiculturalists examine and ‘critique’ various kinds of oppression while calling for a more just social order. Although this group of scholars and practitioners is not monolithic in nature, the common goal is to ‘transform’ the existing systems to make them appropriate, relevant, and equitable with regard to difference. For the purposes of this literature review, I identify three overlapping and commensurate themes within critical multicultural education that situate this study: social and cultural approaches, critical economic approaches, and anti-racist approaches.

**Social and Cultural Approaches to Critical Multicultural Education**

Scholars (i.e., Asante, 1987; Anzaldua, 1987; Gordon, 1994; Gutierrez, 1995; Woodson, 1933) in various ethnic studies disciplines maintain that the residual influences of ‘Whiteness’ are forever present in many of the multicultural and pluralistic models of knowledge construction. Consequently, these scholars advocate for ethnic-based means of constructing, interpreting, and ultimately evaluating knowledge. In the case of those known as ‘Afrocentrists’, for example, they argue that African culture and history should not only be included in the curriculum used with African American children, but it should be the center of the curriculum through which knowledge about all other groups and topics are taught (Asante, 1987). Essentially, it is believed that the only means of fleeing the forces of Western ideological supremacy is to embrace a completely ethnic way of constructing knowledge. Further, the present study draws from this body of scholarship, because it places African and African American knowledge at the center of the curriculum as a means of resisting and deconstructing Western notions of history.
To aid researchers and practitioners in responding to the complexities and competing perspectives involved in knowledge construction processes, Banks (1993) provides a typology of five types of knowledge that can be used to better understand different racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender groups. These types of knowledge include: 1) personal/cultural knowledge; 2) popular knowledge; 3) mainstream academic knowledge; 4) transformative knowledge; and 5) school knowledge. Personal/cultural knowledge pertains to knowledge that students develop from home, cultural, and communal experiences. Popular knowledge includes knowledge that is institutionalized within the media and other aspects of popular culture. Mainstream academic knowledge consists of traditional Western theories, paradigms, and concepts typified within formal school disciplines. Transformative knowledge relates to knowledge that is constructed to revise and or replace mainstream canons and epistemologies of knowledge. School knowledge regards facts, concepts, and generalizations usually found in textbooks. Further, it is suggested by Banks (1993) that challenges associated with attending to diverse perspectives can be responded to by including each of these five types of knowledge within the knowledge construction process. This study attempts to integrate both personal/cultural and transformative knowledge in the knowledge construction process as a means of aiding my students in understanding the historical and present experiences of African Americans.

According to Banks (1994), content integration exists as a second dimension of multicultural education. In short, content integration can be described as the extent to which teachers integrate data, examples, and information from a variety of cultural, racial, and ethnic perspectives within a particular subject area, discipline, and or
Researchers (i.e., Banks, 1988; Bennett, 1999; Derman-Sparks & ABC Task Force, 1989; Gay, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1993) have responded to this challenge by providing a number of different models for the ways in which multicultural curriculum reform can occur. What is common among this curriculum reform work is the notion that curriculum reform must extend beyond the classroom walls and lend itself toward some form of social action. For example, Banks (1988) provides us with a 4 level approach to multicultural curriculum transformation. At level 1, the contributions approach, teachers typically include content about ethnic and cultural groups in a superficial and contributive fashion such as holiday observances and celebrations (i.e., Black History month, Women’s History week, and Cinco de Mayo, etc.). What is important to recognize about this approach is that the formal curriculum remains in tact. At the second level, the additive approach, cultural content, concepts, and themes are added to the curriculum. Again, as in the contributions approach, no alteration to the formal curriculum is involved in this approach. The third level, the transformative approach, involves altering the mainstream paradigms, concepts, and assumptions to include the multiple and varied perspectives of persons from diverse and marginalized backgrounds. What makes this approach distinctive from the previous two is the fact that the curriculum is actually transformed and re-constructed to become inclusive of the perspectives of both the dominant and marginalized groups in the world. The final level, the social action approach, extends the transformative approach and prompts students to take social and civic action toward rectifying problems identified within the curriculum. The present study draws from the third level of Banks model and attempts a transformative approach to curriculum reform.
Much like Banks (1988), Sleeter and Grant (1993) supply a typology of five different approaches to multicultural education in general and multicultural curriculum in particular. The first approach, *teaching the exceptional and the culturally different*, involves teaching diverse groups of students (albeit age, race, ability, class, etc.) to develop the skills, knowledge, dispositions, and language necessary to assimilate into the mainstream society. Essentially, the overarching goal within this approach is to aid diverse students in becoming productive citizens within current societal structures. The second approach, *human relations*, involves teaching others to develop a sense of ‘tolerance’ for diverse groups in society. The focus within this approach is to reduce stereotypes and prejudice among different groups in society. The third approach, *single-group studies*, involves teaching through the lens and experiences of one particular diverse group in society (i.e., gays, Native Americans, women, etc.). This approach assumes that illuminating traditionally marginalized perspectives will ultimately lead to empowerment for members of that particular group. Moreover, this perspective assumes that by teaching through the perspectives of marginalized groups, non-group members will become motivated toward social action. The fourth approach, *multicultural education*, works toward developing a curriculum that reflects the plurality and diversity embedded in a democratic society. The implicit idea within this approach is cultural inclusiveness. The final approach, *social reconstructionist*, labors to teach students to move beyond identifying inequality and inequity in society. This approach works to encourage, motivate, and support students in making changes in the current social order within society. Again, as with the fourth level of Banks’ model of multicultural curriculum, social action within the larger society is the fundamental goal and purpose
within this curricular approach. In like manner, extending the notion of education that is social reconstructionist, Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner, and Peterson (1994) define the notion of social justice education. That is, education where curriculum is:

1) Grounded in the lives of one’s student
2) Critical
3) Multicultural, anti-racist, pro-justice
4) Participatory
5) Hopeful, visionary
6) Activist
7) Academically rigorous
8) Culturally sensitive (p. 4-5).

While social reconstruction is an implicit and ultimate goal within this work, this study can be more closely identified as involving a single studies approach within Sleeter and Grant’s typology. Further, this work also draws from Christensen, Karp, Miner, and Peterson’s notion of social justice education, as it meets all of the characteristics outlined above.

Banks (1999) explains that equity pedagogy exists “when teachers use techniques and teaching methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class-groups” (p. 17). Moreover, Banks and Banks (1995) inform us that equity pedagogy emphasizes effective teaching methods and the contexts in which they are used. To this end, they tell us that equity pedagogy, because of its focus on equitable teaching methods, is inevitably linked to content integration and
assumption. Teachers pursuant of equity pedagogy must not only focus on how they teach, but what they teach and how it is assessed to ensure equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds.

Research concerned with equity pedagogy centers on successful teachers of children who have been historically underserved by schools (i.e. Au, 1980; 1993; Delpit, 1995; Garcia, 1999; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Much of this research focuses on the salience of culture in pedagogical approaches that lend themselves toward student achievement both socially and academically. This form of successful teaching is often referred to using terms such as “culturally appropriate”, “culturally congruent”, and or “culturally relevant” within this body of work. Scholars within this area argue that schools are primarily based in and founded on European-American cultural values, language, epistemologies, and frames of reference. Consequently, this Eurocentric orientation creates learning challenges for many groups of students who are not from White-middle class backgrounds. Further, this community of scholarship has focused on learning styles among African American, Native American, Pacific Islander, Latino, and Asian children and youth. For example, Boykin (1994) identifies nine dimensions of African and African-American experiences that should be incorporated and built upon in instructional contexts. These dimensions are:

1. Spirituality—This connotes an acceptance of a non-material higher force that pervades all of life’s affairs.

2. Harmony—This implies that one’s functioning is inextricably linked to nature’s order and one should be synchronized with this order.
3. Movement—This connotes a premium placed on an interwoven amalgamation of movement, (poly) rhythm, dance, and percussion embodied in the musical beat.

4. Verve—This connotes a particular receptiveness to relatively high levels of sensate (i.e., intensity and variability of) stimulation.

5. Affect—This implies the centrality of affective information and emotional expressiveness and the equal and integrated importance of thoughts and feelings.

6. Expressive Individualism—This denotes the uniqueness of personal expression, personal style, and genuineness of self-expression.

7. Communalism—This implies a commitment to the fundamental interdependence of people and to the importance of the group.

8. Orality—This connotes the centrality of oral/aural modes of communication for conveying full meaning and the cultivation of speaking as performance.

9. Social Time Perspective—This denotes a commitment to a social construction of time as personified by and event orientation (Boykin, 1994 p.128).

Closely related to the ideal of cultural learning styles is the notion of culturally appropriate or culturally responsive pedagogy. This body of research (i.e., Delpit, 1994; Foster, 1995; Foster, 1997; Gay, 2000, Irvine, 1990; Jordan & Au, 1979; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Villegas, 1988) related to cultural influences in education centers on the ways in which pedagogical approaches respond to issues of cultural difference in the classroom. Essentially, this body of research argues that culturally specific approaches to
pedagogy can lead to increased achievement and social change within the larger society. Four major variations of this ideal exist within this body of research: culturally appropriate pedagogy, culturally congruent pedagogy, culturally responsive, and culturally relevant pedagogy. While much commonality exists in and between each of these conceptualizations, significant differences exist nonetheless. For example, based on their early work with Hawaiian children in the Kamahena Early Education Program (KEEP) Jordan and Au (1979) conceptualize ‘culturally appropriate education’ as instructional events that: 1) are comfortable for the children; 2) comfortable for the teacher; and 3) promote the acquisition of academic skills. Also based on research with Native American students, Mohatt and Erickson (1981) conceptualize the notion of ‘culturally congruent pedagogy’ as pedagogy that uses the communication styles, participation structures, interaction styles, and monitoring strategies most consistent to those used in students’ home environments.

Similarly, Irvine (1990) contends that school failure in and among Black students is attributed to a concept known as ‘cultural dyschronization’. That is, the belief that cultural discontinuities exist between the African centered culture that many Black students embody and the culture that is valued and used most often in schools. Accordingly, Irvine identifies three contexts wherein cultural discontinuities exist: societal context, institutional context, interpersonal context, and teacher and student expectations. The societal context concerns prescriptive beliefs and structures in society. Next, the institutional context relates to the schooling practices and beliefs relevant to culture. The interpersonal context concerns the teacher and students’ cultural characteristics. Teacher and student expectations make up the final context where
cultural discontinuities occur. Essentially, Irvine explains that underachievement occurs as a result of Black students interacting in these contexts in ways that are discontinuous with home or natural cultures.

An example of ‘culturally responsive pedagogy’ is seen in Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez’s (1992) ethnographic study of ‘household funds’ of knowledge. In this study, the researchers studied the various types of knowledge present in households of one Mexican community. This knowledge was then documented and stored in what the researchers call a ‘fund’ to be utilized during subsequent instructional contexts. The knowledge that the researchers documented pertained to a wide variety of objects and services ranging from horses to storytelling. The researchers then interviewed many of the family members to better understand the ideologies, values, and uses behind many of these objects and services. This information was then incorporated into formal instructional contexts at school. Data from the study indicate increased levels of student and parent participation as well as enhanced student leaning.

Ladson-Billings (1994) theorizes ‘culturally relevant pedagogy’ as embodying three tenets: 1) academic achievement; 2) cultural competence; and 3) sociopolitical action. Regarding the notion of academic achievement, she explains that culturally relevant teachers are concerned first and foremost with the academic success of their students. However, she cautions that culturally relevant teachers use multiple and diverse means of assessing students’ abilities. Cultural competence concerns the degree to which teachers are familiar with students’ cultural background and able to utilize students’ cultures within instructional contexts. Finally, the sociopolitical tenet concerns action toward social change. Essentially, she sees culturally relevant teachers as teachers who
work toward social transformation within society, while simultaneously encouraging and supporting social action in and among his or her students. More recently, Gay (2000) introduces and defines the notion of ‘culturally responsive’ pedagogy as pedagogy that works to reverse underachievement among students of color by:

…using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)

In short, what is common within each of these different conceptualizations of culturally specific instructional models is that students maintain and or develop a strong sense of self-esteem as their culture becomes the vehicle and tool for academic and social achievement. Moreover, within these models of pedagogy, students work to develop a sense of critical consciousnesses related to dominant power structures in society and what Delpit (1995) calls the ‘codes of power’. Like the previously mentioned body of scholarship, the present study places culture and race at the center of the curriculum while working toward developing increased levels of achievement and critical consciousness. However, unlike the previous studies, the present study focuses on the teacher’s (my) experiences while working toward these goals, as opposed to emphasizing student outcomes and experiences.
Critical Economic Approaches to Critical Multicultural Education

Schools as Sites of Cultural Reproduction

While the previously mentioned community of scholarship within critical multicultural education largely attributes academic underachievement among diverse students as being linked to issues of culture (albeit language, communication, learning styles, or pedagogy), other scholars (i.e., Apple, 1993; Bourdieu’s & Passeron’s, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Darder, 1991; Fine, 1987; Friere, 1972; Giroux & Penna, 1979; McLaren, 1989; Oakes, 1985; Kozol, 1991; Shor & Friere, 1986; West, 1993b) argue that underachievement is a biproduct of capitalism within America. Broadly, this body of research, with its heavy Marxist influence, asserts that schools work to maintain and reproduce the current economic structure within society. In other words, based on its capitalist structure, schools work to reproduce large numbers of workers who sustain and increase the economic power and domination of a relatively small number of owners in society. This body of research is conceptualized around three key themes related to school and economic oppression: 1) schools as sites of reproduction; 2) ideological indoctrination through curricula control; and 3) pedagogical domination. Early research related to the first of these three themes suggests that many of the normal structures within schools work to sustain and replicate the inequitable class structure within society. For example, in espousing what they called the ‘correspondence principle’ Bowles and Gintis (1976) illustrate how schools produce graduates who are fit primarily to assume positions as workers within a corporation by the ways in which rewards, curriculum (overt and hidden), and social interactions (i.e., competition, hierarchal, etc) are
structured. Moreover, they contend that the economic statuses of parents directly influence the quality of educational opportunities available to children. Finally they argue that the modern school model developed more out of a corporate interest and need for a workforce than a desire to develop a democratic society. It is important to note that while this body of work gives primacy to capitalism as both a theoretical framework and analytical lens, it, nonetheless, extends and applies these theories and analyses to other forms of difference. Further, in this sense, these frameworks and analytic tools can be thought of as prompting an economic critique that aid us in better identifying and understanding other forms of critique (i.e., race, culture, gender, sexuality, etc.).

Closely related to Bowles and Gintis’ notion of correspondence is Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) notion of ‘cultural capital’. Essentially, cultural capital can be thought of as a particular kind of culturally based social knowledge that is necessary for people to interact successfully in social exchanges. In this sense, cultural capital can be thought of as the currency or capital individuals need in order to participate fully in particular social contexts. While this knowledge is largely culturally and socially constructed, Bourdieu and Passerson, nonetheless, point out that this knowledge is frequently tied to the availability of economic capital. As such, lower class schools, by virtue of being comprised primarily of lower class students, do not tend to yield the same forms of cultural capital as schools with middle-class and or wealthy children. Furthermore, children in lower or working class school settings frequently do not acquire the cultural capital necessary to interact and move beyond such class positions within society.
Role of Hidden and Overt Curriculum

Other scholars interested (i.e., Apple, 1993; Giroux & Penna, 1979) in the ways in which economic inequalities result in underachievement among students from diverse backgrounds focus on the role of curriculum within this process. Accordingly, this body of research emphasizes at least two ways in which curriculum lends itself toward maintaining and even furthering the current class structure in society. First, according to Giroux and Penna (1979) the hidden curriculum works to transmit dominant social values related to individualism and inequality while simultaneously alienating students from the community which they come form. Essentially, Giroux argues that what is not explicitly included in the curriculum is as important or detrimental to students’ lives as what is taught explicitly. For instance, curriculum is often comprised of historical accounts of domination and pity for those with few economic resources. Rarely are stories told related to other ways (i.e., morally, spiritually, communally, etc.) in which those with lower economic resources are enriched. To this end, considering the sociopolitical purposes of schools within a capitalist society, he argues that particular kinds of exclusions within the curriculum are intentional. As an alternative, he suggests that curriculum be based around themes relating to humanism, social interaction, and community.

Now, while Giroux emphasizes what is there within the curriculum and how it works to sustain economic oppression, Apple (1993) emphasizes the ways in which the formal or ‘official curriculum’ sustains and exacerbates economic oppression. Accordingly, he argues that what is largely propagated as an objective and politically
neutral collection of knowledge in the ‘curriculum’ in many cases is, in fact, a means of advancing dominant political and cultural ideologies. As such, much of the dominant perspectives related to class, race, etc can be found in much of the formal and legitimated curriculum in schools. Further, by legitimizing this curriculum, those within the dominant positions retain control over what students do and do not learn in schools. In keeping with these notions of dominant ideological advancement through both the formal and informal curriculum, this present study uses the curriculum as the chief site to identify, resist, and combat oppression both in school and in society.

Critical Pedagogy

In addition to explicating how economic oppression exists and is advanced at the structural and curriculum levels, critical research in this area also underscores how economic oppression is advanced via pedagogy (i.e., Anzaldua, 1987; Anyon, 1981; Bartolome, 1994; Freire, 1972). This body of research suggests that particular kinds of pedagogical practices correspond with class positions in society. Essentially, those within lower classes in society do not participate in the same types of pedagogical experiences as children in middle class and upper middle class settings. Moreover, this research strongly asserts that these pedagogical differences lead students to assuming particular positions within a capitalist society. One example of research in this area is seen in Anyon’s (1981) examination of pedagogical styles in four distinct schooling contexts: working class, middle class, professional class, and elite class. Data from her study reveal parallel relationships between the types of pedagogy used most often in these specific contexts and the types of skills needed and used in occupations in that
specific context. For example, she noted that students in the working class setting experienced pedagogy centered primarily on direct instruction and continuous production—much like the types of skills embedded in working class occupations (i.e., factory workers, garbage collectors, etc.). In contrast, she noted that pedagogy used in the elite setting centered on more autonomous and creative thinking skills—much like the types of skills necessary in elite occupations. On the whole, her study suggests that students are being prepared for particular positions within the future workforce by the kinds of pedagogical experiences they participate in.

According to Freire (1972), it is common for those in working class school contexts to participate in what is known as the ‘Banking’ model of education. Within this model, the teacher is seen as the only and ultimate source of legitimate knowledge. Students are seen as empty vessels upon which knowledge is bestowed by the teacher. This passive model of education works to desensitize students to power asymmetries in society and to prepare them to be passive workers within a capitalist world. Essentially, over a period of time and through ongoing participation in banking models of education, students learn to accept the status quo within schools and society. As an alternative to this model of pedagogy, Freire (1972) theorizes the notion of critical pedagogy as a means of teaching for critical consciousness. That is, a dialogical approach to education that values both the teacher and learner as equal and active contributors in the knowledge construction process. This model of teaching and learning is based in critical questioning or ‘problem posing’ as a means of unearthing hidden ideologies, values, assumptions, and meanings within school knowledge and events within the world. To aid in this process, knowledge is consumed and interpreted within a dialectical relationship between
students’ most familiar contexts and the larger historical, political, and economical contexts in society. Further, it is believed that once students and teachers develop new and deep levels of critical consciousness, they can then work together toward emancipatory ends. The present study draws from Freire’s notion of critical pedagogy as a process of education for critical consciousness through critique and dialogue. However, while economic oppression is the center in Freire’s notion of critical pedagogy, race assumes the foreground in the critical pedagogy used in this study.

Critical Literacy

Closely related to and embedded in Freire’s (1972) notion of critical pedagogy is Freire and Macedo’s (1987) notion of critical/emancipatory literacy. As mentioned earlier, a significant portion of knowledge in formal and informal contexts is constructed and transmitted through verbal and written texts. According to these scholars, many of the dominant perspectives and ideologies are constructed and transmitted through the normal (verbal and written) texts made available in society. Thus, the authors argue that students should be taught to read text critically as a means of illuminating larger discourses and values related to power and domination prevalent in society. In other words, students should learn to ‘read the world’ instead of merely ‘reading the word’. Again, it is believed that once students and teachers develop new and deeper levels of critical consciousness through this form of literacy instruction and interpretation, they can begin to work toward goals of social transformation and change. Further, the present study draws from Freire and Macedo’s notion of critical literacy as a means of
developing critical consciousness related to issues of race and racism in both present and historical contexts.

A number of critical multicultural theorists and practitioners have since (re)defined, applied, and extended Freire and Macedo’s notion of critical literacy to meet the needs of critical multicultural education in a variety of contexts. As such, McDaniel (2004) cautions researchers and practitioners against developing and implementing technical and rigid notions of critical literacy. Instead, researchers and practitioners should view critical literacy as more of a philosophy than a set of techniques to encourage the inclusion of multiple perspectives. For instance, placing an emphasis on children, Comber (2001) defines critical literacy as helping children “…research how things are, how things got to be that way and how they might be changed; and to produce texts that represent the under and misrepresented” (p. 1). Next, Powell, Cantrell and Adams (2001) identify three key assumptions of critical literacy: 1) literature is always embedded in a particular ideological perspective; 2) literacy supports a democratic system; 3) and literacy can be empowering and ultimately lead to transformation. Similarly, Lankshear and McLaren (1993) point out that critical literacy encourages humans to critically reflect on the politics of reality as a means of creating a more democratic society for all parties involved. According to Lankshear and McLaren, critical literacy encourages social justice as it interrogates the relationship between words and attitudes, beliefs, and values in society. Teachers who implement critical literacy approaches frequently are concerned with raising awareness related to the intended audience, the dominant perspectives, and the marginalized or missing perspectives. Regardless of its different uses within school and classroom settings, one common theme
exists within the notion of critical literacy across the scholarship on critical literacy. That is, critical literacy provides critical multicultural scholars and practitioners with frameworks for identifying, critiquing, and dialoguing about issues of oppression and marginality through the use of literature. Within this study, I relied implicitly on theories of critical literacy within each of the lessons in the unit. Thus, I find it necessary to briefly review literature related to critical literacy and research in early childhood and elementary settings.

Research on critical literacy in early childhood and elementary classroom settings emphasize different approaches to critical literacy. Some of these studies emphasize the use of critical literacy in personal or authentic contexts. Examining the potential between critical literacy and student activism, Powell, Cantrell, and Adam (2001) worked as a team of participant observers in a 4th grade classroom in Kentucky. The students in this classroom engaged in a project entitled “Saving Black Mountain” which was aimed at saving the local mountain from being destroyed by lumberjacks and coal miners. The students read critically and inquired about the varying and conflicting perspectives involved in this dilemma and then arrived at a potential solution to this problem. Ultimately, the students developed a compromise between the coal miners and the Kentuckians whereby 1850 acres on the mountain were saved from logging and mining.

Similarly, Vasquez (2001) worked along side the teacher and the four and five year olds in a Kindergarten classroom who actively resisted an annual event in their school known as ‘French Café’. Essentially, all of the students in the other grade levels were invited to the event, while the students in grades K were prohibited from attending.
The students in this classroom identified this practice as unjust and decided to resist by writing a formal petition to the school administration. Ultimately, in response to this petition, the school administration changed the rules of the event and made it school-wide for the following year. In both of these examples, critical literacy was used to respond to issues of social justice in ‘real-life’ contexts.

Hefferman and Lewison (2000) developed and implemented a critical literacy curriculum in Heffferman’s 3rd grade classroom that exposed the students to early political social activism. Through reading social issues books critically about life today and yesterday, the students learned about traditionally marginalized voices in history. While the students initially assumed impartial or passive stance toward many of these critical issues in the texts, over time, they began to assume more active stances toward issues of injustice. Further, near the end of the study, the students eventually went as far as to write letters to their local government officials to address many of these issues.

Another example of using critical literacy to identify and respond to issues of justice in one’s own life is seen in Comber and Simpson’s (2001) work in a 4th grade classroom. Essentially, the 4th grade classroom read about the challenges and pitfalls the forty-niners faced as they came to California during the Gold Rush. Through critical reflection and dialogue about this issue, the students made critical connections to issues of justice in their own lives.

While much of this research focuses on critical literacy in relevant, personal, and authentic contexts, other classroom based critical literacy research emphasizes the importance of moving beyond the individual and considering issues of justice within
broader contexts. For example, Yeager and Silva (2002) encourage teachers to engage students in discussion of justice and injustice not only in their classroom or school, but in the world around them as well. After completing their work in a 4th grade classroom as a participant observer, they recommend that teachers urge children toward thinking more broadly about issues of justice by asking why they think things are unjust, why the unfairness or injustice is permitted, and what changes are necessary to make the situation fair.

Creighton (1997) warns us that this task of moving beyond the most familiar and authentic contexts while using critical pedagogy is often an arduous task, because we all see the world through our own gendered and cultural experiences. To combat this challenge, Bishop (1997) suggests that teachers become familiar with a variety of books across many different genres. Moreover, teachers should read books by ‘insiders’ or people who share the same sociocultural identity as that being represented in the book to better understand what that particular culture is about. To illustrate this point, she cites an example of a well-intentioned White teacher who misunderstood the cultural nuances of ‘nappy hair’ while using a picture book entitled *Nappy Hair*. The Black parents and community of the students in this class were outraged by the teacher’s insensitivity and inability to discuss the cultural significance of hair and its politics within the lives of many Black people. In lieu of these challenges, the teacher eventually resigned from her position. As alarming as this incident may seem, Wollman-Bonilla (1998) explains that such a case is a rarity, as most teachers avoid these types of issues and texts in their classrooms. Thus, much remains to be learned related to teachers’ experiences who *do*
engage critically and openly in such issues. Further, the present study attempts to extend the present scholarship in this area.

Anti-Racist Approaches to Critical Multicultural Education

In as much as the previously mentioned body of research argues that economic domination within a capitalist society attributes to inequitable education opportunities and underachievement for students from diverse backgrounds, another body of research (i.e. Deyhle, 1995; DuBois, 1938; Kalin, 1999; King, 1991; King, 2005; Kunjufu, 1985; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; West, 1993; Woodson, 1933) attributes racial/ethnic oppression as an explanation of school inequities and underachievement within and among diverse groups of students. Essentially, this body of research asserts that racial oppression and ‘White Privilege’ that is pervasive in the world is also prevalent in all facets of schooling. I identify two major themes that exist within this body of research: school as institutions of racism and the deconstruction of Whiteness. The first theme, schools as institutions of racism, pertains to the research in this community of scholarship that identifies, analyzes, and theorizes ways in which systemic forms of racism exists and is furthered through ‘normal’ school functions (i.e., curriculum, pedagogy, discipline, tracking, parental involvement, etc.). The second theme, the deconstruction of Whiteness, pertains to research in this community of scholarship that investigates the ways in which Whiteness or notions there of contribute to racial oppression in schools. It is important to note that much of the research in this area does not denote the importance of other forms of marginalization in schools and society. Instead, race is seen as the fundamental lens
through which other forms of oppression are identified (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, economic, etc.).

Two classic examples exemplify scholarship in this area. The first example of work in this area is Woodson’s (1933) text *The mis-education of the Negro*. In short, Woodson argues that the model of school that most ‘Negros’ or Black people participate in systemically decreases self-esteem, service, political activism and ultimately social transformation among African American people. With its overwhelming emphasis on White standards, norms, and values, Woodson argues that the fundamental goal of the formal schooling system is to maintain the marginalized status of African Americans in society through systematic means. Upon completion of the K-12 education experience, educated African Americans become displaced from other less educated African Americans and eventually come to view themselves and their role in society in much of the same way as White supremacists. In much of the same way as Woodson, Du Bois (1938) advocates for a critical and political action based model of education as a means of empowerment for ‘Black Folk’. He argues that due to racism embedded within America’s history in general and the history of the South in particular, Blacks should not put a tremendous amount of faith in the formal schools established by Whites. Moreover, Blacks must wrestle with a somewhat challenging and eventually contradictory sense of ‘double consciousness’ in America related to their identity as being both African and American. As a result, rather than ‘compromising’, he argues that Blacks need an independent system of schools based in social justice and political empowerment as a means of acquiring: 1) the right to vote; 2) civic equality; and 3) the education of youth according to ability (p. 32).
While Woodson (1933) and Du Bois (1938) broadly establish the significance of race and racism within school and societal contexts, subsequent research (i.e., Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1997; Nieto, 2000; Oakes, 1985) in this area documents specific and systemic ways in which racism leads to inequities in schooling opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. This research illustrates various ways in which normal structures, policies, and procedures within schools work to produce negative outcomes for students from diverse racial and or ethnic backgrounds. For example, in her classic text, *Keeping track: how schools structure inequality*, Oakes (1985) notes how typically occurring and normal practices such as tracking, placement, assessment, and pedagogical styles lead to disproportionately negative outcomes for students of color. Regarding the issues of tracking, data from her study reveal that disproportionate numbers of minority students were tracked into lower level classes.

Much like Oakes (1985), Nieto (2000) situates the underachievement of students of color within sociopolitical contexts. Through the use of multiple case studies, she documents how racism exists and is advanced systematically through: tracking, standardized testing, curriculum, pedagogy, physical structures, disciplinary policies, limited role of students, limited role of teachers, and limited family and community involvement. As a solution to this these challenges, she offers a critical, process, and social justice oriented conceptualization of multicultural education as school reform. Further, within Nieto’s conceptualization of multicultural education, teachers, researchers, students, administrators, parents, and the like work toward racial and cultural justice within each of the previously mentioned areas simultaneously.
While the previously mentioned body of scholarship emphasizes combating systemic racism within broader and multiple contexts within schools, a number of studies (i.e., Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 1999; Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Haymes, 1995; Kalin, 2002; Lee, Menhart, & Okazawa-Rey, 1998; Tatum, 1997; Ramsey, 1998; West, 1993) advocate various approaches to resisting and combating racism through pedagogy. For example, Haymes (1995) suggests that urban Black students participate in a ‘pedagogy of place’ as means of overcoming oppression in schools. Essentially, that is, “…pedagogical conditions that enable blacks in the city to critically interpret how dominant definitions and uses of urban space regulate and control how they organize their identity around territory, and the consequences of this for black urban resistance” (p. 35). Further, because pedagogy plays such a significant and instrumental role in maintaining and exacerbating racial oppression in society, scholars within this area espouse ways in which alternative pedagogies can reverse and deconstruct this process (i.e., Bartolome, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Kalin, 1999)

In keeping with this notion of creating and implementing anti-racist curriculum and pedagogy, Derman-Sparks (1989) identifies four different levels of anti-racist multicultural education. The most basic level, the ‘tourist curriculum’ involves teachers engaging in a single event or activity. This level is problematic because if frequently leads to an increase in stereotypes about a particular cultural group. The next level is known as the project or unit approach. This level involves inserting something substantive with regard to culture into the existing curriculum. For example, this might involve teaching a unit on Native American history. The next level, commonly known as the integrated or transformative level, involves integrating multicultural content
throughout all subject areas such as math, science, language arts, etc. This level encourages students to be critical of knowledge and the ways in which it is constructed. The final level is known as social action. This level involves encouraging students to ‘act’ for social justice. The present study is situated at the second level along this continuum.

In addition to investigating the role of race and its influence on achievement in and among students of color, the second theme within this larger body of critical anti-racism research relates to what I identify as the notion of ‘deconstructing Whiteness’. Essentially, this body of anti-racist research (i.e., Paley, 1979; Sleeter, 1993) investigates the role of ‘Whiteness’ in contributing to and furthering racial oppression in education. In as much as the former theme concerns primarily the experiences of people of color, this theme centers on the experiences of Whites or Whiteness as it relates to the process of identifying, resisting and combating racial oppression. It is important to note here that both themes labor toward the same goal of understanding, identifying, and eliminating racial oppression in schools and society. However, the second theme focuses on the role of Whites within this quest; thus, a large majority of this work consists of White scholars investigating and or deconstructing Whiteness in their own lives or the lives of other Whites. For example, regarding the overwhelming and prevailing presence of Whiteness in education, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) explain how many Whites resist the notion of White supremacy and privilege by positioning themselves as a victim of some sort. Rather than admit that they are benefactors of racial privilege, they purport themselves to be victims of programs, efforts, pedagogies aimed at combating racism. Further, self-
positioning relieves many Whites of the self-guilt and responsibility associated with working toward racial justice.

Other researchers (i.e., McIntosh, 1988; Kalin, 1999; King, 1991; Paley, 1979; & Sleeter, 1993) document how ignoring the role and importance of Whiteness can lead to negative educational experiences for students of color. For example, Paley regrettably (1979) discusses how negating to discuss racial difference in her classroom further complicated the racial identity development processes of several Black children in her classroom. Despite her attempts to ignore race, she discusses how it was and continued to remain an influential factor in peer to peer relationships, teacher to peer relationships, and teaching and learning interactions in her classroom. In line with this school of thought, King (1991) asserts that many teachers participate in what she calls ‘dyconscious racism’ by not critically reflecting on the ways in which race impacts their lives and the lives of their students. Essentially, if teachers (White) are not aware of the ways in which particular kinds of structures and pedagogies work to sustain and further racial oppression, they will inevitably reproduce these structures and pedagogies as a normal part of their practice. Similarly, Kailin (1999) documents how ‘colorblind’ racism is embedded in much of the liberal discourses on race in schools. In her study, she interviewed 222 teachers in a high achieving and predominately White school district related to racism in their schools. Findings from the study indicate that most teachers in this school district assumed a ‘blame the victim’ attitude about racism. What her study suggests is that teachers can in fact hold racist attitudes while simultaneously professing liberal non-racist attitudes toward students of color. Moreover, because perceptions ultimately impact teacher behavior, it is likely that these attitudes will manifest in teacher
practices in some shape or fashion. In keeping with both of the previously mentioned themes in this body of anti-racist scholarship, the present study centers on identify, resisting, and combating racism in society in general and school curriculum in particular through the use of anti-racist pedagogy.

Drama Pedagogy as Critical Multicultural Pedagogy

Definitions and Characteristics of Drama as Used in this Study

While it is common for many people to use the terms ‘drama’ and ‘theatre’ interchangeably, drama practitioners (i.e., Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Morgan & Saxton, 1987; O’Neill, 1997) declare definitively that drama is not theatre. Instead, it is only one component of theatre. While theatre emphasizes production and audience, drama’s focus is on the individuals involved and the learning that occurs therein. Accordingly, Riherd & Swortzell (2001) explain that the Drama in Education (DIE) approach to teaching and learning involves a wide variety of topics such as domestic, social, legal, political, health-oriented, racial and environmental issues. In this form of pedagogy, students are typically guided through a series of structured and unstructured activities where they are forced to confront the conflicts and complexities embedded in these issues. By coming into contact with these adverse, difficult, and dilemma-ridden situations, students become involved in active role taking where attitudes and experiences become the primary concern. This process allows students to be both participants and observers of the dramatic action simultaneously. Further, because student learning is directly connected to the processes of improvisation, role-play, mime, and simulation that occur therein, DIE is frequently referred to as process, creative, or developmental drama.
O’Neill (1997) underscores several key characteristics of drama. First, she points out that drama is a highly social and collaborative activity that requires on-going participation by both teachers and students in a myriad of capacities. Teachers and students work together to construct drama worlds and activities jointly. Regarding the collaborative and social roles of the students during the creation of a drama world she points out that:

The students’ involvement in the creation of these worlds requires them to be alert, to listen, to comprehend, and to contribute by responding immediately and appropriately. As they help to build drama, students are simultaneously developing their social and linguistic competencies and exercising listening skills and self-control (p. 86).

On the other hand, pertaining to the roles of teachers, she further points out that:

Teachers are also co-creators of the dramatic world with the students, and the roles they adopt within this world to enable them to bring significance to the activity through their involvement. This involvement allows them to model appropriate behaviors within the situation, diagnose the students’ skills and understanding, support their efforts, question superficial thinking, and extend students’ responses (p. 86).

Essentially, within the collaborative efforts of those involved (teachers and students), individual ideas, thoughts, concerns, and perspectives are invited, accommodated, and re-accommodated to meet the needs of the activity and interests at hand.
A second key characteristic of process drama, according to O’Neil (1997), is tension. Tensions will inevitably develop between the participants and the teacher as the group works toward encouraging and accommodating individual ideas, perspectives, and responses. Nonetheless, it is this tension that determines the depth and direction of the dramatic event. As she further states, “different levels of tension will operate in drama, depending on the context and the teacher’s purposes, but without this essential dramatic and interactional element, the drama is unlikely to develop to any depth” (p. 97).

A third important characteristic of drama is trust. O’Neil (1997) explains that trust becomes essential in drama teaching and learning situations because teachers typically have to abandon structured lesson plans in order to make the dramatic exercise successful and meaningful. The teacher must assume a role that is encouraging and affirming to the risks students employ. Further, students have to trust each other and the teacher enough to feel liberated and empowered to voice their beliefs and perspectives related to the tensions that emerge during the drama event.

O’Neil (1997) explains that a fourth significant characteristic of drama is questioning. Because drama tends to concern itself with the ways in which people behave in particular circumstances, questioning assumes a key role in the development and progression of the drama event. While questioning has been known to be quite effective during the beginning and ending portions of the dramatic event, questioning can also be quite useful during the development of critical events within the drama activity. Further, questions posed at various stages of the drama activity seek to serve different purposes. For instance, questions posed during the early stages of the dramatic event
tend to focus on establishing the dramatic world. In contrast, questions posed during the middle portion of the dramatic activity are used by teachers to:

1) Indicate the parameters of the imaginary world
2) Strengthen students’ commitment to their roles
3) Invite explanation and elaboration
4) Clarify dilemmas and suggest tasks
5) Imply status and achievement
6) Supply information indirectly
7) Focus students’ linguistic imaginative efforts
8) Remodel limited or inaccurate responses
9) Deepen students’ thinking about these issues involved in the drama (p. 96).

A fifth key characteristic of drama, according to O’Neil (1997) is reflection.

Arguably, reflection is the most important part of the teaching and learning process, because it allows teachers and students to recognize their own learning as well as demonstrate the extent of their achievements. Reflection can serve a variety of other purposes for the teacher, student, and the dramatic event as well. For example, Morgan and Saxton (1987) indicate that reflection can help students come to understand the significance behind the dramatic event. It provides a space for teachers to clarify learning objectives, re-frame tasks, encourage students’ questions, and even amend students’ self esteems. Further, O’Neil (1997) summarizes reflection in drama as a process that allows teachers and students to:

1) Review the progress of the drama
2) Prepare for the next stage of drama

3) Clarify students’ thoughts and feelings about the content or form of the work

4) Resolve problems

5) Evaluate the insights and skills that have been displayed

6) Make connections between the drama and students’ own experiences (p. 100).

Drawing from the aforementioned definitions of drama, the drama involved in the present study places more emphasize on the processes of teaching and learning that occur while involved in the drama activities than the products that are resultant. More specifically, I use the collaborative, reflective, open-ended, questioning, and dilemma ridden aspects of the drama process to teach critically about African American history. Having outlined the broad tenets of drama as used in this study, I now precede with a discussion of the specific drama activities used in this study.

Dramatic Activities as Used in this Study

There are many different drama activities fit for teachers to use as they engage in teaching and learning about issues related to race, culture, and diversity. For the purposes of this review, however, I provide background to the drama activities related specifically to this study. These activities include: guided imagery; mantle of the expert; tableaux; and role-play. Concerning guided imagery, Annerella (1999) points out that this is one of the most commonly used drama activities. During this dramatic experience, the drama-leader guides students along an imaginary journey while using their
imaginations as the trip progresses. Because wording and instruction is essential to this mode of drama, students are never told to pretend when eliciting a response. Instead, students are simply informed that they are going on a trip and they will be asked to do or be something during this trip. In an effort to encourage authenticity in students’ responses, students are asked to supply all of the details and experiences during the voyage. Upon completion of the voyage, the drama leader initiates a debriefing session to discuss what they experienced during the trip. She further states:

Guided imagery can set the mood for a story as the creative drama leader leads the students through a guided trip when they must make decisions and become involved in the same situation as the characters in the story. Thus, the students develop background for the story, experiencing a direct link to the story through visualization. This makes the setting, character, and plot of the story much easier to understand and cultivates empathy for the characters (p.9).

A second drama activity employed in this study is mantle of the expert (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explain that students assume the role of an ‘expert’ while participating in this activity. Students become active constructors of knowledge as they sort, interpret, and consume information in an attempt to adequately arrive at a particular point of view. Often, students encounter various challenges and tensions as they make decisions from a position of knowledge and authority. Within these challenges and tensions, students come to understand the limitations and constraints inherent in particular roles.
A third drama activity used in this study is *tableaux*. That is, according to O’Neil (1997), a non-verbal drama activity in which students create an image to present to the rest of the class. These images are developed in an attempt to gain insight and understanding about a particular situation, circumstance, conflict, and or theme. Essentially, the purpose behind the tableaux is for students to engage in highly selective, controlled, and careful forms of expression. The tableaux allows students to become involved in the drama activity without placing much of a demand on their verbal and or presentation skills.

*Drama as Multicultural Pedagogy*

A growing number of drama practitioners (i.e., Grady, 1997; Heathcote, 1984; Manley & O’Neil, 1997) point out several ways in which drama pedagogy can be useful in mediating issues of diversity in regular or non-drama classrooms. The first of these ways relates to empathy. According to Manley and O’Neil (1997), drama can help students develop a sense of empathy for groups of people in society with whom they are not so familiar. Through the use of one’s imagination (which is an integral part of most drama activities), students can develop visual images related to the experiences of particular groups of people. Accordingly, this process of visual imagery provides an opportunity for students to critically reflect upon, understand, and even vicariously experience the worldviews, identities and positions of individuals and groups of people that are different from their own. Further, as students interact with the affective, social, cultural, and political aspects of various groups of peoples’ existence in society, they inevitably develop a sense of empathy for other groups in society.
An example of how students come to develop this new sense of empathy for groups other than their own is illustrated in Scheurer and Webb's (1997) work in a fifth grade urban classroom. During a particular drama activity, the teacher assumed the role of a slave owner and informed the students who were enacting the role of African slaves that they would receive a new name and new attire. Students then worked in pairs with their eyes closed and assumed the roles of African villagers. With their eyes closed, students were asked to move about the room and search for their partners. As the students moved, the teacher carefully removed a few other students from the activity to make this task more difficult. Later, when asked to describe the experience, students admitted feeling hopeless and alone. Essentially, this activity allowed students to experience authentic feelings of isolation, separation, and loss of freedom in ways that were somewhat similar to the ways the slaves they were portraying experienced these feelings. Further, while this illustration involved slaves and a slave master, it could very well be used to help students think about other aspects of diversity.

A second way that drama can be used to respond to issues of diversity in the classroom pertains to voice. Gay (1999) points out that drama has the potential to give voice to otherwise silenced issues, perspectives, and groups of people in the world in general and in the curriculum in particular. Because many drama activities are based in and around themes of conflict and tension, students are encouraged to present and assume competing characters and perspectives. As she further states:

The theatre stage can be a viable place where diverse peoples can claim their voices, choose how they wish to speak and what they want to say, and have a
great deal of freedom to employ multiple voices to exemplify the multidimensionalities of their cultures and experiences. It is a place and medium through which people silenced too long can speak candidly, with rage, with aestheticism, with power, with authority, and with effect. Consequently, the drama and teacher can be profound avenues of release, revelation, liberation, reclamation, and renewal for ethnically diverse and marginalized people (p. 8).

An example of how drama can provide a space where students are liberated to speak about issues in ways that are important to them is illustrated in Weiss’ (2002) work with ‘at-risk’ students in an urban high school. Utilizing drama games, role-playing, group discussions, brainstorming, and small and whole group drama work, the teacher and 20 high school students developed a series of anti-racism workshops. The workshops ran for a total of 8 weeks and ended with a culminating camping experience. As the participants critically examined the impact that racism has had on their lives, they were encouraged to use radio plays, songs, poems, and conduct interviews that would better help them deal with and express their perspectives on racism. Following the completion of these workshops, students were asked to create an ‘Anti-Racism Radio Show’ to voice the various perspectives they encountered during their workshop experience. Surprisingly, the workshops and the ‘Anti-Racism Radio Show’ provided the participants with a forum to openly voice their perspectives on race with each other as well as with a larger audience. Further, through this discussion students not only became more aware of the ways in which culture impacts life for particular groups of people, but through critical reflection they were also able to “…challenge both the alienation and shame that arise from racism” (p. 232).
A third potential benefit of using drama pedagogy to respond to issues of diversity in the classroom concerns self-representation. According to Gay (1999), the task of dealing with diverse perspectives in school curricula has historically been left in the same hands of those who benefit most from racist systems of privilege—White, middle and upper class, able bodied, heterosexual men. As a result, many of the images and stories constructed and articulated about diverse groups of people in our society were frequently taught by European Americans using Western notions of quality, culture, and value. Needless to say, many of these portrayals were highly distorted, negative, and biased to say the least. However, because the content in most drama activities is based in and around students’ social, political, historical, and cultural experiences, it can serve as a medium to consciously counter many of these false images and representations first hand. Further, unlike many other forms of teaching and learning, drama provides an educational space where students can more accurately represent their own social, cultural, political, and historical identities within the curriculum.

A fourth potential benefit of using drama to deal with issues of diversity in the classroom is that it infuses pluralistic perspectives and knowledge bases into traditionally singular and narrow school curricular (Grady, 1997). Grady (1997) points out that because so many drama activities are embedded with deeply complex content, concepts, and conflicts, drama leaders frequently draw from and infuse multiple sources of knowledge to aid students in acquiring adequate levels of understanding. For example, a drama leader may draw from multiple sources such as history, sociology, literature, anthropology, and even personal autobiography in an effort to help his or her students
better come to terms with many of the complexities and contradictions embedded in notions of culture, power and exploitation in a drama event.

A fifth potential benefit of drama as a form of multicultural pedagogy relates to critique and dialogue. Drama theorists and practitioners (i.e., Boal, 1979; Doyle, 1993; Hornbook, 1997; Medina & Campaon, 2006; Rohd, 1998) point out that drama, compared with other forms of pedagogy, readily provides and even encourages spaces for students to engage in critical dialogues about injustice, power, and the perceived nature of reality. A recent exemplar of this benefit of drama is seen in Medina & Gerald’s (2006) work. Through examining data collected in two separate 5th grade classroom, the authors/researchers in the study identify three important conclusions related to drama and the development of increased consciousness. First, drama can create spaces where children dialogue critically and openly about issues and perspectives related to diversity. Second, drama can be used as an informant about particular sociocultural communities wherein researchers works; as they both learned much about the two distinct research sites through drama. Finally, drama can provide spaces for children to critique and dialogue about issues most relevant in their immediate sociocultural contexts.

Summary

In sum, multicultural theorists, scholars, and practitioners have and continue to argue for multicultural approaches within the school curricular as a means of better addressing the needs of diverse populations of students. Interestingly, much variance exists as to ‘what’ the practices should be and ‘how’ these practices should look in schools. While mainstream Western traditionalists argue for ‘inclusive’ or ‘tolerant’
approaches to multicultural education, scholars and practitioners within the field of critical multicultural education argue for ‘transformative’ approaches that engage directly with issues of power, oppression, and marginalization.

In this review, I have identified three communities of critical multicultural scholarship within which the present study is situated. These bodies of scholarship include: 1) social and cultural approaches to critical multicultural education; 2) critical economic approaches to critical multicultural education; and 3) critical, anti-racist approaches to critical multicultural education. The first of these three communities of scholarship, social and cultural approaches, consists largely of studies that investigate the relationship between social and cultural differences and student achievement. Much of this research exists as either theoretical typologies or models for integrating and developing curriculum and accounts of classroom where teachers who engaged in culturally specific forms of pedagogy demonstrated higher levels of success with diverse students. While these documented accounts serve as good exemplars of the potentials of ‘culturally responsive’, ‘culturally relevant’, or ‘culturally appropriate’ education, they, by and large, are all conducted through the theoretical perspectives of a researcher who is not a natural member of the classroom community. A relatively small number of these studies involve the teacher positioned as both teacher and research while attempting this form of pedagogy. Thus, the present study attempts to respond to this gap in the literature by adding to what is known about this form of pedagogy from the first-hand perspectives of the teacher involved in the study.
A second of body of critical multicultural education scholarship that frames this research relates to the notion of schools and curriculum as sites of social reproduction. This body of research is predicated upon the assertion that schools and curriculum are structured in ways that produce and re-produce the current capitalist class structure in society. Much of this work centers on both theories and empirical accounts of the ways in which taken for granted or ‘normal’ structures, curriculum and pedagogical practices maintain and advance economic oppression in society. Methodologically speaking, much of this literature highlights entire schools and curriculum as the primary unit of study. While a small number of these studies involve elementary classrooms as the focus of the study, an even smaller number of these studies transpire in an early childhood setting. Thus, the present study will potentially add to what is known about schools and curriculum as sites of reproduction within the context of early childhood classroom settings.

A third body of critical multicultural education scholarship that frames this research pertains to anti-racist approaches to critical multicultural education. Placing race and racial oppression at its center, this body of research underscores ways in which schools work to reify and advance racial oppression through its ‘normal’ structures, curriculum, and pedagogical practices. While a preponderance of this work illuminates the ways in schools as a whole and the individual processes that occur therein (i.e., tracking, testing, pedagogy, funding, etc.) contribute to racial oppression and disparities in achievement for students of color, little has been documented related to the process and impact of developing and implementing a specific anti-racist curriculum that exists in direct opposition to the prescribed and mandated curriculum. Thus, the present study will
add to the present body of literature related to ant-racist curriculum as a specific form of multicultural curriculum.

In addition to contributing to the body of critical multicultural education scholarship, the present study will expand what is known related to the use of drama as form of critical multicultural pedagogy. Again, much of this work (specifically with regards to race, racism, and drama) occurs in upper elementary, middle school, and high school settings. Hence, the present study will contribute to what is missing in the literature related to drama as a form of critical multicultural pedagogy and the early childhood classroom. Having reviewed the literature that frames this work and established warrants for this research study, I now proceed with a discussion of the methodology of this study in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“Critical action research expresses a commitment to bring together broad social analyses: the self-reflective collective self-study of practice, the way language is used, organization and power in a local situation, and the action to improve things” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003 p. 338).

The purpose of this qualitative critical action research study is to examine my experiences teaching critically about African American history through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy. The central research question that guides this work is: How does teaching critically about African American history influence the perspectives and understandings in my 1st grade classroom? Other more specific questions are:

1). What is the nature of critical, anti-racist pedagogy in this early childhood classroom?

2). What instructional challenges and changes occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?
3). What developmental challenges and changes in and among my students occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

4). What personal/political challenges occur as I teach critically about African American history?

5). What pragmatic challenges and changes (i.e., classroom, institutional etc.) occur as I teach critically about African American history?

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the two broad research paradigms (qualitative research and practitioner research) within which this study is situated. Subsequently, I discuss the epistemological assumptions and theoretical frameworks that inform the chosen formal methodology involved in this study. Next, I detail the formal research design of this study, along with my positionality within this research. Then, I describe the curriculum unit implemented as the plan of action within this study. Fourth, I discuss the methods of data analysis I employed. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the criterion utilized to ensure trustworthiness, validity and ethics within this work. I now precede with a discussion of the research paradigms that situate this research.

Where I Situate This Study: Research Paradigms

Given the inductive nature of the research questions, this study broadly utilizes a qualitative research design. (Erickson, 1986; Marshal & Rossman, 1999). Marshall and Rossman explain that, “…[qualitative methodology] values and seeks to discover participants’ perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process
between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people’s worlds and observable behavior as the primary data” (p. 7-8). Consequently, because this study both values and seeks to discover my perspectives while engaging in critical, anti-racist education, I found it befitting to employ a qualitative research design.

Due to this study’s focus on my first hand experiences as both the teacher and the researcher in the study, it also employs a teacher research or practitioner research approach to inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lyte, 2004). According to Cochran-Smith and Lyte (2004), practitioner research is research in which: 1) the practitioner assumes the role of researcher; 2) local and practitioner knowledge assumes primacy in the knowledge construction processes; 3) the professional context exists as the focus of study; 4) traditional boundaries between practice and inquiry are often eliminated; and 5) reconstituted notions and criterion for validity and generalizability are adhered to and applied during inquiry (p. 12).

*What I Believe: Epistemological and Theoretical Frameworks*

This study is informed by and situated within both the Social Constructivist (Crotty, 1998) and Critical Theoretical research paradigms (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2003) to embody what Kincheloe (2005) defines as a *Critical Constructivist* approach to research. First, regarding the constructivist notion of the term, this study is informed by a social constructivist epistemology. That is, according to Crotty (1998), “…the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). To
this end, constructivism assumes that meaning is a product of human consciousness. In keeping with Crotty’s explanation, I began this study with the assumption that knowledge is neither found nor discovered; rather it is constructed through social interaction with other human beings. Moreover, I assumed that the broader contexts (social, political, cultural, economic, etc.) in which knowledge is constructed determines the ways in which knowledge is constructed, as well as the meanings attached to this knowledge. Thus, I initiated this study with the epistemological assumption that knowledge of social occurrences within my classroom could not be acquired outside of meaningful social interaction with the students in my classroom. Also, I assumed that the knowledge construction process is situated within and shaped by the larger social, cultural, historical, and political contexts within public education in the U.S. in general (i.e., No Child Left Behind Legislation) and this urban school (i.e., Academic Watch state rating\(^1\), Standardized Social Studies Curriculum) in particular.

Now, because knowledge is constructed through social interactions between different human beings who occupy varying social positions and word views, it is inevitable that power imbalances will develop and be advanced through these social interactions. It then becomes impossible for the knowledge that is constructed from a constructivist epistemology to be neutral or apolitical (Shor & Friere, 1986). As Kincheloe (2005) cautions, researchers must bear in mind that asymmetries of power exist within human relationships in societies in general and within and between specific

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\(^1\) This rating is given by the State Department of Education on the basis of outcomes on specific standardized measures. This rating is used to rate the perceived level of effectiveness of a particular school. Central administration within this school district has reacted to this rating by mandating teachers to teach a prescribed 120 minute daily literacy program as a means of increasing literacy outcomes on these standardized measures.
roles (i.e., teacher/student; man/woman; researcher/native) in particular. The question then becomes: How do we construct knowledge in ways that give deference to both the social contexts in which it is constructed and issues of power and marginalization? It is here that I find the Critical Theoretical qualitative (Kincheloe, 1995) paradigm useful and appropriate. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) emphasize that the Critical Theoretical approach calls for both a “dialogical and dialectical” methodology wherein the “…inquiry requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of the inquiry; and dialogue must be dialectical so that previously held notions are transformed and changed giving rise to new and more informed knowledge” (p.109-110).

I drew upon tenets within both of these paradigms (Social Constructivist and Critical Theory) to inform this study. First, in keeping with the constructivist notion that knowledge results from human interaction, I designed the study to center on my interactions with my students as a whole, as well as their interactions with each other. Next, from a Critical Theoretical perspective, I treated this knowledge as value-laden and value-mediated; thereby warranting critique. Because my experiences as the teacher within this classroom served as the focus of this study, much of this critique was self-reflexive and self-interrogative as a means of creating more equitable relationships between my students and I. In response to the Critical Theoretical paradigm’s call for methodologies that are both dialogical and dialectical, I positioned myself as both a learner and a teacher with the study through the implementation of Critical Literacy (Shore & Friere, 1986) and process drama instructional approaches (O’Neil, 1997). Further, my hope in adhering to these specific tenets of critical theory was to decentralize the traditional power relationships between teacher and students and researcher and
students, as a means of creating a more egalitarian, mutually beneficial research endeavor for all parties involved in this work (hooks, 1997).

What I did: Methodology

Informed by a Critical Constructivist paradigmatic orientation, this study employs a critical action research methodology (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998; McCutcheon & Jung, 1990; Tripp, 1990). While multiple and varied definitions of action research exist, I draw from Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1998) definition of action research in this study. They define action research as:

…a form of collective self-inquiry that participants in social settings undertake to improve: 1) the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices; 2) the participants understanding of these practices and the situations in which they carry out these practices. Groups of participants can be teachers, students, parents, work place colleagues, social activists or any other community members—that is, any group with a shared concern and the motivation and the will to address their shared concern (p. 5).

In keeping with the self-inquiry portion of the definition above, I examined my teaching experiences while teaching critically about African American history through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy, as a means of improving the nature of my multicultural educational practices. In addition, concerning the later portion of Kemmis and McTaggart’s definition above, I examined my teaching experiences within the natural classroom and curriculum contexts in which they occur. Thus, based on these two
reasons, I consider this study to be action research. Now, although multiple iterations of action research exist (i.e., critical, feminist, technical, practical, participatory, etc.), four basic recursive processes embody action research as a methodological framework. According to Lewin (1946), action research involves a continual cycle of planning, acting, fact-finding, and analysis. These processes are repeated to eventually form a spiral of reformulated planning, revised action, additional fact-finding, and re-analysis. Essentially, while engaged in the action research process, the researcher’s thinking oscillates between what is happening, what is planned, what is found, and what these findings mean. Further, it is this reflective, active, and re-active nature of action research that makes it distinctive from other forms of research. Extending Lewin’s (1946) notion of action research, McTaggart and Kemmis (1988) succinctly identify the four phases of action research as: 1) planning; 2) acting; 3) observing; and 4) reflecting. In keeping with both of the aforementioned characterizations of action research, I began this study by developing an initial plan of action that involved implementing a unit on African American history in my first grade classroom. Next, I implemented a series of 9 lessons within this unit. Third, I systematically observed myself and my students during each lesson. Finally, I reflected on each lesson during the implementation process and made both minor and significant changes to the original curriculum outline along the way.

Specifically pertaining to the critical notion of critical action research, Tripp (1990) points out that critical action research differs from other forms of action research, in that, it involves deliberate and self-reflective critique. Moreover, because critique of human action is inevitably connected to/with the larger social world in which it occurs, critical action research can be thought of as a social process. To elucidate the social
nature of critical action research, Tripp (1990) uses the term ‘socially critical action research’ when referring to critical action research. Tripp (1990) outlines 5 specific characteristics of critical action research. First, it is predicated upon social participation. Because critical action research is based in social critique, it is rare that critical action research would occur in isolation or as an individual project that does not involve any interaction with other human beings. Second, critical action research is internally directed; as it is concerned with the emancipatory interests of the participants involved. Third, it strives to problematize the nature of reality and consciousness. Fourth, it seeks to both identify and resist institutional constraints that may arise during the course of the project. Last, critical action research seeks to produce some outcome that did not formally exist. He further points out:

…socially critical action research in education can be defined as being strategic action on the part of classroom teachers, aimed at increasing social justice. It is productive of and based on knowledge generated by formal research, and occurs within the context of critically oriented professional communities. Socially critical action research is informed by the principle of social justice, both in terms of its own way of working and in terms of its outcomes and orientation to the community. In practical terms, it is not simply a matter of challenging the system, but of seeking to understand what makes the system be the way it is, and challenging that, while remaining conscious that one’s own sense of justice and equality is itself open to question (p. 168).
Much like Tripp’s (1990) explication of the nature of critical action research, Kemmis and McTaggart (2003) point out that critical action research is predicated upon a view of practice as reflexive and therefore necessitating the study of it dialectically. That is, critical action research assumes that:

… to study practice is to change it, that the process of studying it is also “political”, and that its own standpoint is liable to change through the process of action—that is a process of enlightenment about the standpoint from which one studies practice as well as about the practice itself (p. 354).

This view of practice resists traditional dichotomized notions of individual versus the social and the individual and the objective versus the subjective. Alternatively, this view of practice and the study thereof seeks to examine the mutual relationship between these notions. This reflexive view understands practice as enacted by people who act within the context of larger historical contexts; rendering it both objective (externally given) and subjective (internally understood and interpreted) at the same time. They state:

This view of the relationship between the objective and the subjective is sometimes also described as “reflexive”, because changing the objective conditions changes the way in which a situation is interpretively understood, which in turn changes how people act on the “external”, “objective” world, which means that what they do is understood and interpreted differently, and that others also act differently, and so on (p. 354).
Further, this reflexive-dialectical perspective on practice and the study thereof regards practitioners as engaging in actions that create history while simultaneously researching these actions and this history.

In keeping with these previously mentioned tenets of critical action research, I began this inquiry by identifying a portion of the formal school curriculum that I deemed inequitable with regard to the representation of African American history. Then, I developed a formal plan of action for responding to this injustice that involved developing and implementing a critical and anti-racist social studies unit on African American history. Finally, I employed critical self-interrogation and reflection related to my beliefs and actions while participating in this plan of action.

Tools I used: Methods of data collection

The methods of data collection for this study are qualitative. Again, Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that qualitative methods seek to understand participants’ perspectives on their worlds and views research as an interactive process between the researcher and participant while relying on people’s words and observable behavior as the central data sources. To this end, qualitative methods are both descriptive and analytic. Because this study aimed to investigate my teaching experiences teaching while teaching critically about African American history through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy, qualitative data collection methods seem most appropriate for the kinds of questions posed in this study. In the following sections, I describe the data collection methods employed in this study.
Self-Observations and Field Notes

In keeping with the practitioner research approach embodied within this study, self-observations of key events that occurred during each lesson were recorded at the completion of each lesson in a field note journal (Hubbard & Power, 1999). As Hubbard and Power (1999) explain, immediate recording of events and observations upon completion of each lesson help ensure that significant events or occurrences are noted and included in the data analysis. Thus, I recorded concrete descriptions of what I observed during the course of the lesson at the end of the lesson. I structured each lesson to include a writing exercise for the students to complete independently at the end to allow time for me to record observations of classroom events. Further, because the intent behind this data collection method was to simply capture the classroom events, these observations and field notes here tended to be more descriptive than reflective or analytic in nature.

These field notes focused on the larger classroom dynamics and my interactions with my students during each lesson. Because the structure of each lesson remained consistent throughout the study (pre-text interactions, textual interactions, drama activities, debriefing discussions, and language arts activities), I organized these notes around each of these five aspects of the lessons. First, I noted what happened prior to reading the text, as a significant amount of interaction and dialogue occurred between my students and me prior to reading the text. Next, I noted what happened while I was reading the text. I noted what happened as my students and I engaged with the texts. I paid careful attention to the kinds of questions and discussions that arouse and my
responses to these questions. Then, I noted what happened during the drama activities. Finally, I observed and noted what happened in the concluding debriefing portion of the lessons. Again, I paid close attention to the nature of the discussions, my role within these discussions, and my interactions with my students within these discussions.

Video recordings

Each lesson was videotaped to examine my teaching experiences in greater depth while fully immersed in the teaching and learning process. As Hubbard & Power (1999) point out, videotaping can aid teacher researchers in recording, examining, and analyzing aspects of their practice that may be left out or forgotten during the teaching and learning exchange. Accordingly, much of the drama activities that occurred within each lesson required me to assume a particular role in tandem with the students, videotaping aided me in recording events I may have overlooked during the teaching and learning processes.

I arranged the video recorder in a peripheral corner of the room to keep my students from being distracted by the abnormality of its presence in the classroom. I explained the purpose of the study and the camera prior to beginning the study in an effort to minimize attention to it during the study. My intent in having this discussion was for my students to become comfortable with the camera being present and therefore proceed in ways that were as natural as possible. I reviewed each videotape prior to implementing the subsequent lesson and noted any observations that had been omitted through the initial field notes. Further, I videotaped all aspects of each lesson except the concluding writing portion, as I utilized this time to record self-observations and field notes.
I used a teacher researcher journal (Hubbard & Power, 1999) in three distinctive ways throughout the study. First, I reflected on the processes of developing the curriculum and acquiring the resources for each lesson. I reflected on my thoughts, feelings, and experiences after developing each individual lesson. I noted the challenges I encountered as well as the rationales behind the decisions I made in planning each lesson and the unit as a whole.

Then, I reflected on my experiences after implementing each lesson. I noted significant thoughts and feelings related to any challenges and questions that occurred. This allowed me to both observe and document any shifts in my thinking and experiences that occurred over the duration of the study. Further, these reflections allowed me to analyze what was and what was not happening within a historical context.

Thirdly, I used the teacher researcher journal as a means of being critical and reflexive about my ideologies and actions as both the teacher and researcher in the study. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) argue that it is necessary not only for teacher researchers to document their actions while involved in inquiries, but they also need to document and analyze the undergirding ideologies, assumptions, theories, philosophies, and subjectivities that influence these actions. As a result of this on-going self-critical inquiry, greater levels of analysis occur. Similarly, Bochner and Ellis (2000) explain that reflective journals become especially significant in self inquiries, as they provide a space for researchers to separate themselves from the actions they are so deeply embedded in during the study. In keeping with these two assertions, I used the teacher journal to
engage in self-critical reflection related to my roles as both the teacher and the researcher in the study. I reflected critically on what I was or was not doing in each lesson, as well as possible explanations as to why I acted in a particular manner.

*Documents/Student Work*

Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (1994) explain that it common for practitioner researchers to include classroom documents and student assignments as sources of evidence in their research. Accordingly, student work samples constituted the final data source for this inquiry. I collected and analyzed the student assignments produced during the lessons. These assignments involved a writing assignment for the students to complete independently. Because my students varied in literacy ability, I asked them to draw an illustration that corresponds with what they wrote on the back of each assignment. Whether complete or incomplete, all of these assignments were collected at the end of the social studies period for that day. Again, because the focus of this study was my experiences while engaging in critical anti-racist pedagogy, I used these documents to determine primarily what I was or was not doing as the teacher in the study. For example, when I questioned the lack of student engagement during the text reading portion of a particular lesson, I used the students’ writing assignments as evidence that they were in fact learning or not learning. This consequently led me to search for an alternative analysis of this interaction. While I initially noted in my field notes that I did not communicate the information in the text well, I later realized from the students’ documents that the information had in fact been communicated through the lesson.
Gaining Access

Prior to conducting the study, I gained written consent from my building Principal to conduct the study. I then submitted a formal written research proposal for review by The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After gaining approval to conduct the study in my classroom, I acquired written consent for the students to participate in the study. Approximately 2 weeks passed between the time the permission forms were sent home to the parents/guardians of my students and the time they were all returned. Because all the mornings in my classroom are devoted to delivering a district mandated language arts program, I found it more convenient to restrict this unit to the time formally allotted for social studies instruction. While social studies content and curriculum may be integrated into other content areas, it is mandated to occur 3 to 4 times per week for a total of 120 minutes by our district curriculum supervisor. Thus, I saw it befitting to implement the unit during this allocated period of time.

Timeline

The entire study took a total of 3 months. I spent two weeks prior to implementing the study finalizing the 9 lessons implemented in the study. Also, I used this time to acquire the children’s literature and resources to be used in the study, as the research proposal entailed only a broad overview of the lessons involved in the unit. Taking the district’s mandated time frame for social studies instruction each week into serious consideration, I spent a total of 5 weeks implementing the instructional unit. Specifically, I taught 1 to 2 lessons from the instructional unit per week for a total of 5 weeks (See Table 3.1).
In sum, this study broadly employs a qualitative approach to inquiry. However, because this study is a first hand account of my teaching experiences while teaching critically about African American history through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy, it can be said that this study is additionally situated within the teacher research or practitioner inquiry research paradigm. Methodologically speaking, this study employs a critical action research methodology that is informed by and situated in both the Social Constructivist and Critical Theoretical paradigms. Further, based on these epistemological and methodological locations, I used self-observations, field notes, teacher researcher journal entries, and student documents as the data sources in this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Teacher Activities</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2006-January 2007</td>
<td>Developed broad overview of each lesson</td>
<td>Acquired building consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gathered unit resources</td>
<td>Acquired IRB consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finalized unit</td>
<td>Acquired parental consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflected on unit development process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12-2007-April 9, 2007</td>
<td>Implemented Unit</td>
<td>Self-observations and field notes taken during each lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective journal maintained</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lessons videotaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student work collected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Timeline of Research and Instructional Events

Research and Instructional Events
Epistemological and Theoretical Frameworks

Social Constructivism

Critical Theory

Methodological Approach

Critical Action Research

Methods

Self Observations
Video recordings
Teacher Researcher Journal Entries
Documents

Figure 3.1: Overview of Research Design
Who we are: Place, Participants, and Positionality

Setting

This study takes place in a pre-school through fifth grade elementary school in the Midwestern portion of the United States. At the time of the study, the school had a total of 242 students. Approximately 75% of the students in the school are classified as being Black, Latino, and/or Asian. Nineteen percent of the student population is White. The remaining 4% of the students here are classified as multi-racial. Further, approximately 66% of the students here qualify for free and/or reduced lunch.²

Students in my class

The students in this study are all members of my 1st grade class. The classroom has a total of 28 students. Of the 28 students, 24 are African American. Three students in the classroom are White. One student is of mixed racial heritage, with African American and Asian American constituting her racial background. There are two Latino/a students in the classroom. Twelve students in the class are girls and 16 students are boys. A total of 23 out of the 28 students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The class is considered to be a traditional 1st grade self-contained class. I instruct the students in all academic subjects with the exception of physical education, art, and music. Further, the students leave the classroom only for these special academic subjects and to participate in lunch and recess each day.

² This information comes from school student demographic data maintained by the school administration. This information is also based on self-report information compiled by parents at the time of enrollment.
Positionality

Because this study examines my teaching experiences as an African American teacher researcher teaching primarily African American students critically about African American history, I find it necessary to discuss my positionality within this study in terms of three integrated and overlapping selves: teacher self, racial self, and researcher self. Although these selves are always overlapping, they are individually distinct at times (See Figure 3.2). Rather than discuss my positionality as a fixed location within this study, I draw from Maher and Tetreault’s (2001) notion of positionality as an individual’s “…location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be changed and analyzed” (p.164). At various times within the study, different aspects of my positionality became more significant than others. For instance, while actually implementing the lesson and participating in critical dialogue with my students, my teacher self became more significant than my researcher self. Conversely, at other times my racial self became more significant than the other two selves. It is important to emphasize that while I discuss different aspects of my positionality as being individually significant, this is not to suggest that the other two aspects of my identity did not make important contributions to my thinking and actions within the study simultaneously. For example, although my teacher self assumed primacy many times during the lesson implementation portion of the study, my researcher and racial selves also influenced the questions I posed and the ways in which I interacted with my students. Having outlined
my positionality within this study, I now precede with a discussion of my teacher self in greater detail.

Teacher self

As a teacher, I consider myself to be a critical and anti-racist multicultural educator (Lee, Menkart, Okazawa-Rey, 1998; Nieto, 2000). As Nieto (2000) contends, I believe that schools are microcosms of the larger society. Consequently, the multiple and varied forms of oppression that exist within society (i.e., sexism, racism, classism, etc.) also exist within schools. In addition, I believe that these forms of oppression are often maintained and even exacerbated through many of the ritualized and taken for granted processes and structures within schools (i.e., testing, pedagogy, curriculum, etc.). Finally, because these processes and structures are created by and perpetuated through human (teacher) actions, it is both my belief and hope that humans (teachers) can transform these processes and structures to create more equitable and just spaces for ‘all’ students within schools.

Now, regarding the anti-racist portion of this self-definition, I believe that race and racism has and continues to play a significant role in schooling in the U.S. Thus, as Derman-Sparks (1998) contends, it (race) can serve as a useful theoretical and practical tool in identifying and resisting racial and other forms of oppression within schools. Like other critical and anti-racist multicultural educators (i.e., Derman-Sparks, 1998) I believe that the formal and informal curriculum serves as both a necessary and opportune site for race and racism to be explored, identified, and resisted, as the dominant perspectives within most school curricula center on White and male dominated perspectives (Banks,
As such, I approached the ‘standardized’ social studies curriculum mandated by our district as an opportune site for racial discussion and potential transformation in this study. Nonetheless, such an openly political teacher identity has and continues to have social consequences for me. For example, I have been referred to by several White colleagues as being “fixated on race” or “always making it a race issue” in our building. Still, at other times, my dialogue with fellow colleagues is often perceived as “too abstract” or “too theoretical”. Needless to say, being seen as “fixated on race” and or “too theoretical” has led to a significant degree of misunderstanding, alienation, and even arguments between my colleagues and I. For example, I can recall an argument that a second grade team member and I had over my refusing to wear a small decorative flag to demonstrate my ‘patriotism’ and ‘commitment’ to the U.S. during the 9/11 tragedy. I informed her that I was sad for the victims and those affected by the horrific tragedy, but I also saw the flag and the worship thereof as a tool of indoctrination within schools. I also explained that terrorism has been a problem for many groups of non-White citizens for years in the U.S and the world. As a White middle class teacher, she could not seem to understand how I could express such discontentment with the U.S. in a time of crisis. She stormed out of my room with the flag yelling “fine!” “It’s always about race with you!”

In order to further illustrate my positionality as a critical anti-racist educator within this building, I submit the following short narrative from a reflective teacher journal I compiled during the early portion of my teaching career.
“Here we go that race stuff again!”

I remember being invited to give my input on the building behavior committee by the principal and several other faculty members due to a perceived level of expertise in behavior management. Essentially, my colleagues assumed that I had a greater level of knowledge related to these issues on the basis of student engagement they witnessed in my classroom. At first I felt honored to be a member of this committee, however this feeling of honor soon turned to frustration shortly after the first meeting. My fellow committee members, all of whom were White, wanted to know how they could manage their classrooms more effectively. “If only I could fix their behavior, I could really get some teaching done” said one of the committee members. After a few introductory remarks and complaints, they turned to me and asked, “So, what is it that you do? You seem to have it together. What strategies do you suggest?” It sounded more like they wanted to know how to fix a broken faucet than how to build a loving nurturing learning community. Against my better judgment, I gave it a try. I spoke to the group about issues such as: engagement, relationships, culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural communication, and curriculum. They looked with blank stares as I continued on my soap box for about 15 minutes or so. Then, I explained how African American males were being targeted and disciplined at disproportionate numbers due to teacher expectations. The group seemed a bit offended by this critical analysis. It was one thing to say that the problem was something that was related to the curriculum or teaching, but it became offensive
when I implied that the problem exists within the teachers. So, like Kivel (1996) argues, when Whites are confronted with racism and White privilege their immediate reaction is to become defensive and avoidant. A slew of counter explanations ensued. “Yeah, that’s all good and dandy, but bad behavior is just bad behavior Mr. Husband!” “You don’t have to make everything into a race thing. After all, look how you turned out. I’m sure it wasn’t because of the teachers, but because your mom taught you how to act at school.” “What I really think we need is more Mr. Husbands”. “Their parents need to just teach them how to act at school”. As the meeting ended, I remember heading to my classroom and thinking about how easy and convenient it is to blame the students than it is to work on developing their identities as culturally relevant and critical multicultural educators. From that day on, it seemed like a few of these committee members interacted with me differently. For example, when I walked in on Ms. M tirading about the “terrible” behavior of the 5th grade African American males in her class, I noticed that her conversation came to an immediate halt when she and I made eye contact. I wondered if this had anything to do with our previous interactions and my openly political position about schools as racist institutions. (Teacher Journal, 2003)

Racial Self

In as much as my politicized teacher identity as a critical and anti-racist multicultural educator shapes my broader positionality within this research, my racial identity as an African American influenced my positionality within this work in at least two significant ways. First, like many other African American teachers who teach in
predominately African American classrooms, I felt both a moral and political responsibility to teach my students about the richness and complexity embedded in their history as descents of African peoples. This responsibility motivated both my commitment and compassion within this work. I guess one can say that I felt a great deal of responsibility for what my student would or would not learn about their racial/cultural selves within this moment in time. I assumed that by teaching my students about their history and legacy of greatness, I was, in turn, working with them to advance their position within society. So, I labored intensively within this study to present aspects of African American history to my students that are atypical. For example, rather than spend a great deal of time discussing the contributions of traditional figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, I introduced and discussed less regarded individuals such as Nat Turner and John Brown.

In addition to evoking particular levels of moral and political responsibility within this study, my racial identity also served as an initial frame for identifying where racism exists within the curriculum. I used many of my early and seemingly daunting experiences with racism to ‘orient’ (Whyte, 1984) my decisions to center this work around race, racism, curriculum, and pedagogy. For example, in the beginning stages of this work when I was contemplating what to study (question), who to study (participants) and how to study (methodology), I frequently reflected on the following journal entry written very early in my teaching career about my early schooling experiences:
“I don’t belong here”

I still remember my first experience with what Nieto refers to as institutionalized racism in schools. It was the early portion of my 6th grade year. I had been placed in gifted education classes since 4th grade, so schooling had largely become a mixture of exciting, creative, independent, and critical thinking experiences for me. Like most gifted students, I enjoyed school—but more importantly, I loved learning! These experiences gradually changed when my parents transferred my brother and I to a predominately White suburban school district approximately 15 miles or so outside of the inner city locality. Like many young African American middle class families in the post Regan era, my parents thought that educational equity equated to being educated in the same facilities as White children. After all, being products of the ‘inner city’ (before it was known as urban) themselves, my parents essentially thought that the only way that Black children could have the same educational quality as White children was to more or less have the same education as White children. Right or wrong in their thinking, my parents moved our family to a suburb—not to mention that we were able to move into a larger house which also symbolized a greater degree of material success for them. I guess you can say that this decision was a win-win for both my parents and my brother and I. I was so excited to be starting a new school. What would my new school be like? As I walked down the hall with my mom toward the office, I was struck by the contemporary architectural design of the building. Unlike my previous school in which the walls were made using traditional cinder blocks, the walls in this school were made of transparent glass with coordinating berber carpet covering the floor in each classroom. I remember thinking that this school looked more like a high-end shopping mall than what I had come
to know as a school. After my mother completed the necessary enrollment paperwork, I remember being escorted into a small cubical in a room adjacent to the office. A strange looking older White woman gave me a pencil and a test booklet and began spewing directions for me to follow. As I half-heartedly listened to her words, I sounded out her title on her name tag. “Ms. Bell…” “School …psy…cho…lo..gist”. I thought to myself, “What is a psychologist?”. This pondering abruptly ended as Ms. Bell said “good luck” and exited the room. As I looked down, I realized that Ms. Bell wanted me to complete the test booklet she gave me. I began reading the test and answering the questions to the best of my ability. I took my time and tried my best, but after about what seemed like only 45 minutes or so, Ms. Bell barged in and said “time is up”. As I was escorted from the room, I wondered why I had to take that test. I later found out via a conference with my parents and Ms. Bell that data from the tests were used to determine the “most appropriate” course of study for me. The thought of placing their child in the “most appropriate” learning environment seemed to delight my parents very much. However, it seemed a bit strange to me that after about 2 weeks or so into the course work that I would always finish my work first. The teachers always commented on how bright I was and how I was such a “conscientious” student. By the time I reached 8th grade, I realized that there were essentially three groups of students in our school and essentially three courses of study. Students in the 3rd course of study were the overachievers, while those in the 2nd course of study represented the middle achievers and the 1st course of study represented low achievers. We only took classes that were deemed “most appropriate” for the course of study we were in. I often wondered why some of my friends were taking algebra in 7th grade and why some of us had to wait until 8th grade.
Or, why some of my friends were taking Advanced Placement English courses and others were taking what was known as Basic English courses. At that time I guess you could say my curiosity had more to do why we had to do more work than some, but less than others. My relationship with school as well as my formal academic record gradually decreased during the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade school years. I became less and less enthused with school, as the assignments seemed to be no more than busy work or worksheets. My parents couldn’t understand how my grades seem to worsen even though I was in a “better” school setting. By eighth grade, the teachers all were saying the same thing to my parents in both written and verbal forms of communications: “He is very bright, but not working up to his potential!” What was the problem? (Reflective Journal, 2000)

This particular racial memory, like several others, heavily influenced my decision to focus on curriculum transformation within this study. As I revisited this journal entry over and over again, I wondered what I could do to reverse subtle institutionalized racist practices similar to that documented in the journal. Eventually I perceived the formal standardized social studies curriculum to be an opportune site for racial resistance and transformation within my very own classroom. Thus, it can be argued that my racial positionality within this study served as a theoretical context, point of reference, analytical tool, and pedagogical informant within this study.

**Researcher Self**

It is common within many qualitative research inquires for researchers to position themselves as a participant observer. That is, according to Atkinson and Hammersley (1994), a position within a study in which the researcher participates in a
field of study without making significant changes to the natural dynamics within that field of study. However, because I operated as both the teacher and researcher in this study and thereby made significant changes (both intentional and unintentional) to the natural dynamics within this classroom, I found this traditional definition of researcher positionality a bit unspecific in describing the complexity of my role within this study. At various moments while implementing my plan of action, I questioned how much of what I was doing was research and how much was actually teaching. Operating as both the researcher and teacher in this work, I was often challenged by how to develop and maintain a dialectical view of my practice that was both local and a bit more distant. Within this more traditional conception of participant observation (Schwandt, 1997), the implicit goal is for the researcher to maintain some degree of distance to and from the community being researched as a means of ensuring basic levels of objectivity. However, what happens when the researcher purposefully participates in the field of study in order to make conscious changes toward racial justice? Moreover, what happens when the researcher is actually a natural member of the cultural community being investigated? In search of answers to these questions, I visited some critical perspectives on active researcher positionality. Yet, in much of the same way as traditional notions of participant observation, I found many of these notions (i.e, Kemmis,, 1991;McTaggart, 1991) equally inappropriate to my role within this work, as most of these conceptions of researcher positionality constructed the researcher as an outsider working with marginalized or oppressed communities toward liberation. Although I conceived of myself as working with my students toward justice and ultimately emancipation within our classroom, I was, nonetheless, an insider within this classroom. Thus, I still found
many of these critical constructions of researcher positionality a bit loose fitting for my role within this study. It was then, consequently, that I found researcher positionality as defined within the practitioner research paradigm more appropriate to my role as the researcher in this study.

Accordingly, Herr and Anderson (2005) outline a continuum of 6 different researcher positionalites within practitioner research in general and action research in particular. The first positionality involves an insider researcher studying his or her own practice. Also commonly referred to as self-study, reflective practice, and narrative inquiry, this might involve a teacher, principal, administrator, counselor, etc investigating a question in his or her own personal practice. The second positionality involves an insider researcher working in collaboration with other insiders to investigate a particular question or phenomena. An example of this position may involve a teacher working in collaboration with other teachers and or professionals to understand and or change a question or problem within their own building. The third positionality involves an insider working in collaboration with outsiders to understand and or change a question or issue. This might involve a group of teachers working with university faculty members to understand or change a question or issue within a social setting. The fourth positionality involves reciprocal collaboration between insider and outside groups. In other words, two or more groups work in mutually beneficial relationships in order to understand and or change social phenomena. The fifth positionality involves outsiders working in collaboration with insiders to understand and or improve social settings. This positionality differs from the fourth positionality, in that, this collaboration is not necessarily done in a reciprocal fashion. An example of this form of collaboration might
include an education consultancy being assigned by central administrators to ‘improve’
the teaching and learning situation in a particular school setting. Clearly, in this case, the
relationship is not reciprocal in nature. The final positionality involves outsiders
studying insiders and his or her practices. This positionality is what is most consistent
with the traditional notions of participant observation as mentioned earlier in this section.

In this study, I positioned myself in a way that was consistent with the first
positionality identified on this continuum. Although I was the researcher in the study, I
was also an insider within the research community. Yet and still, my role as the
researcher within this study was not merely to study/understand my practice as is
typically the nature of practitioner work defined as reflective, autobiographical, or
narrative. Instead, my roles in this research additionally involved taking conscious
efforts to transform my practice.

One of the largest and most rewarding challenges within this work was operating
in and between dual roles as both the teacher and the researcher in this study. At times
during this study, this dualistic location served as a major strength, as it provided direct
access into what Herr and Anderson (2005) called the ‘insider’ perspective on my
teaching practice. Moreover, as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) argue, occupying the
dual spaces of both the researcher and teacher in this study allowed me to develop and
construct interpretations of classroom interactions that are closely related to and
grounded in locally situated perspectives and meanings.

Now, this is not to suggest in any way that occupying dual roles as both the
researcher and teacher in this study was without challenges. Although my teacher
researcher positionality afforded me greater access to the insider perspectives and meanings within this work, it, nonetheless, presented challenges specifically related to my role as the researcher in the study in at least two ways. First, being both the researcher and the teacher in the study, I often struggled with what to capture as data and what to dismiss as a ‘normal’ part of teaching. For example, I remember redirecting a few students who were ‘off-task’ during the reading portion of one of the lessons. Arguably, most teachers would simply dismiss this as a regular part of teaching. However, when I reviewed the videotapes as the researcher in the study, I questioned if this and similar kinds of interactions warranted specific attention, as Blumer (1969) argues that taken for granted interactions within most cultural communities are symbolic to understanding the larger cultural context as a whole. Thus, I could not help but to wonder if these interactions were simply standard operating practice as a teacher or if they symbolized the development of something much greater and deeper. I temporarily solved this issue by noting these kinds of observations in my observation log and reflecting on them in my researcher journal. Further, I revisited these events during the subsequent data analysis portion of the study.
Plan of Action

In keeping with the critical action research methodological framework undergirding this study, I developed and implemented an instructional unit as the plan of action in this study. My rationale in doing so was to respond to issues of racial inequity within the current institutionalized curriculum by developing and implementing a curriculum related to African American history. Rather than merely add to or integrate the current social studies curriculum with African American perspectives, my goal was to pursue a ‘transformative’ approach to multicultural curriculum reform (Banks, 1995).
Further, because it was important for me to seek curricular transformation through pedagogies in which my students and I could act in co-constructive, critical, dialogic, and reciprocal roles as teachers and learners, I incorporated process drama pedagogies in each lesson.

The unit consisted of 9 individual lessons that required approximately 30-45 minutes of instructional time to implement. While the content discussed in each lesson varied, the overall structure of each lesson remained the same. First, the lessons began with an introductory portion in which I developed background information related to the topic through questions and dialogue. In addition, this introductory portion often consisted of a brief review of the previous lesson’s content. The second portion consisted of a textual interaction between my students and I in which we read, discussed, and critiqued particular texts as a whole group. The third portion consisted of participating in one or more drama activities that required my students and I to draw from and extend the information learned in the textual interactions and previous lessons. The fourth portion, debriefing, involved having a discussion with my students related to the recent drama activities. The fifth and final portion of each lesson involved my students completing a language arts assignment independently (See Table 3.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Portion</th>
<th>Activities Involved</th>
<th>Approximate Time Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: Introduction</td>
<td>Introduced texts</td>
<td>10 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewed previous concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Textual Interaction</td>
<td>Read, discussed, and critiqued textual information</td>
<td>15-25 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3: Dramatic Interactions</td>
<td>Participated in drama activity related to textual and previous lesson concepts and information</td>
<td>10-15 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: Debriefing</td>
<td>Discussed drama activities and the roles therein</td>
<td>5-10 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 5: Language Arts Assignment</td>
<td>Students completed language arts assignment independently</td>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared responses when time permitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Format of Lessons
Curriculum Description

The unit included a total of 9 lessons on various aspects of African American history beginning with slavery and ending with a discussion of racism in more contemporary contexts. Each lesson built upon the information and concepts discussed in the previous lesson(s). Originally, I intended to teach 10 lessons. However, after reflecting on issues of time and feasibility, I saw it more suitable to limit the unit to a total of 9 concise lessons. Furthermore, the unit was arranged in a chronological sequence starting with the acquisition of African from the continent of African and ending with a discussion of racism in contemporary contexts.

Lesson 1: Origins, Beginnings of Slavery

This lesson introduced and explored some key causes of U.S. slavery and involved two texts. First, I used Kamma (2004) If You Lived When There Was Slavery in America to provide a background for the origins of U.S. slavery. This book provides a non-fiction portrayal of various aspects of slavery. Due to its lengthiness, I elected to read a select number of pages related to the beginnings of slavery. Because the illustrations in this book were presented in a cartoon-like fashion, I also used several pictures from Feeling’s (1995) The Middle Passage to better capture, to some degree, the horrid nature of experience for Africans and Europeans involved in slavery. My hope in doing so was to avoid misrepresenting the serious nature of slavery with my students.
I began the lesson by posing several background questions related to the concept of slavery, slaves, and slave masters. I then read and discussed several pages in Kamma’s (2004) *If You Lived When There Was Slavery in America*. Moreover, I presented several pictures from Feeling’s (1995) book. Next, the students and I dramatized various roles involved in moving through the “Door of No Return”. At the completion of this dramatization, my students and I engaged in a discussion related to their experiences as Africans, Europeans, and travel through the slave castles. I concluded the lesson by having my students write and illustrate what they would do if they were being captured. My intent in this literacy exercise was for them to think critically about the marginalized experiences of Africans as they were being captured and forced into slavery, as well as the limited options for resistance that were available.

*Lesson 2: Journey to America*

This lesson explored the nature of life for Africans aboard slave ships as well as the journey from Africa to America. I began by reviewing the concepts presented in the previous lesson and introducing the concept of slave ships. I read and discussed Chambers’ (1988) text entitled *Amistad Rising*. Essentially, this piece of realistic fiction discussed life aboard a slave ship and a specific slave revolt involving a slave named John Cinque. I read and discussed the first 13 pages in Johnson’s (1993) realistic fictional book entitled *Let Me Fly*. This portion of the book described Africans being captured from local villages and the exchanges some African people made with European captors. My purpose in selecting and using this book was to increase the complexity of the discussion around the purposes of slavery. I wanted my students to understand that
capitalism played a vital role in the U.S. slave trade, so much so that some African people even sold their own people in exchange for monetary profit.

The process drama in this lesson involved two different activities. First, to build on the previous lesson, the students re-enacted walking through the “Door of No Return” as both Africans and European slave captors. Second, the students and I enacted what life was like on a slave ship. My intent in this second activity was to capture, to some degree, the physical proximity of Africans during their captivity on a slave ship. The students and I actually positioned themselves on top of each other on a small mat during this activity. I asked the students to enact what the African people did and said during this experience. The subsequent discussion revolved around the experiences of both the Europeans and Africans while aboard slave ships. I concluded this lesson by having my students write and illustrate what they would have done if they were slaves aboard a slave ship. My intent was to engage my students in thinking critically about issues of resistance and submission from the perspectives of Africans who were captured.

Lesson 3: Plantation Life

I began this lesson by reviewing the previously learned concepts and introducing the concept of slave plantation to my students. I read and discussed several specific pages in Johnson’s (1993) *Let Me Fly* relating to plantation life. I also read and discussed several specific pages in Kamma’s (2004) *If You Lived When There Was Slavery* related to plantation life. My purpose behind using both of these books was to capture the different yet equally dismal experiences between slaves who worked in the slavemasters’ field houses and those who worked outdoors on the plantations.
The process drama in this lesson involved enacting roles as both the slave masters and the slaves while working on plantations. The students and I took turns assuming roles as both the slaves and slave masters. We dramatized several ways in which the slaves and slave masters behaved and communicated while working on the plantations. The discussion portion of the lesson emphasized their experiences as slaves and slave masters. This lesson concluded with my students writing a letter to a slave master. My rationale behind using this writing prompt was to encourage my students in resisting the institution of slavery via written language.

Lesson 4: Slave Resistance and Escape

I began this lesson by reviewing the concepts presented in the previous lessons. I then introduced the concept of the Underground Railroad to my students. I read and discussed Nelson’s (2003) text entitled *Almost to Freedom*. Essentially, this piece of realistic fiction describes the life of a family of slaves who traveled along the Underground Railroad and their stops at various safe-houses.

The process drama in this lesson involved two activities. First, my students and I pretended to travel along the Underground Railroad in secrecy as runaway slaves. Next, we divided into two different groups and pretended to be both runaway slaves and slave masters. We enacted the experiences and language both of these groups embodied during these experiences. Again, the discussion focused on our experiences in role as well as the roles themselves. Finally, I concluded the lesson by having my students write and illustrate why they would or would not have chosen to escape as slaves. My intent within this writing assignment was to engage my students in a critical evaluation of both the
positive and negative consequences associated with slaves attempting to flee the institution of slavery.

Lesson 5: Anti-Slavery Abolitionist Movement

I began this lesson by reviewing the concepts presented in the previous lessons. I then introduced the concept of ‘abolitionist’ to the class. I read and discussed Adler’s (1992) text entitled *A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman*. Essentially, this piece of realistic fiction chronicles the life of Harriet Tubman from early in childhood until her death. Moreover, it presents, in both literary and photographic forms, many of the significant contributions Harriet Tubman made to the Abolitionist Movement.

Much like the previous lesson, the process drama in this lesson involved my students and I pretending to be ‘runaway’ slaves on the Underground Railroad. We dramatized the role Harriet Tubman played as a relentless and sometimes confrontational leader in this endeavor. We also dramatized the tensions between escaping slaves and slave masters who re-captured them. Finally, we further complicated the drama by integrating the role of the abolitionists. My intent in this last drama activity was to help my students understand the complex and often competing nature of relationships between these three groups (slaves, slave masters, and abolitionists). I concluded the exercise by having my students write about what they would have done as abolitionists. My purpose behind having my students write about being an abolitionist was to have them think critically about responding to issues of oppression from a somewhat ‘privileged’ perspective. That is, many of those working within the abolitionist movement were both
White and male. I wanted my students to wrestle with the notion of social justice from the perspective of groups in power.

Lesson 6: Civil War

I began this lesson by reviewing the concepts from the previous lessons. I read and discussed specific pages (59-62) in Kamma’s (2004) *If You Lived When There Was Slavery* relating to the Civil War. Then we dramatized the war between the Union and Confederate Armies from both perspectives. Next we dramatized the actions and language the Confederate Army embodied as they lost the war. We discussed our roles as Confederate and Union army soldiers. Finally, we dramatized the actions and language the Confederate Army embodied as they won the war. The subsequent discussion revolved around their roles as members of the Confederate and Union armies. I concluded this lesson by having my students write about 3 possible alternatives to war the two armies could have taken. My intent was to have my students think critically about multiple alternatives to solving human conflict.

Lesson 7: Reconstruction

This lesson began with a review of the previously discussed concepts. I introduced the concept of the Klu Klux Klan to my students. Then we read and discussed pages 6-25 in Heinrichs’ (2003) text entitled *The Klu Klux Klan: A Hooded Brotherhood.* This non-fiction text documents both the origins and legacy of the Klu Klux Klan as a historical organization committed to advancing White supremacy throughout the world.
In addition, it documents the significant role the Klu Klux Klan played in resisting the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s.

The process drama in this activity involved my students and I pretending to be members of the Klu Klux Klan who encountered a Black man walking alone one night. Next we pretended to perform a ‘night ride’ on an African American family. We discussed our roles as KKK members. Finally, I concluded the lesson by having my students write a letter to the KKK. My intent was to have my students use literacy as a means of resisting the malicious overt acts of racism commonly associated with the legacy of the KKK.

Lesson 8: Jim Crow

I began this lesson by reviewing the content presented and discussed in the previous lessons. Next, I introduced the concepts of segregation and Jim Crow laws to my students. We read and discussed pages 6-23 in Venable’s (2002) text entitled The Civil Rights Movement: Journey to Freedom. This non-fiction text documents the Civil Rights movement starting with the Jim Crow segregation era and ending with the passing of the Voting Rights Act.

We dramatized the historic moment in 1960 when 4 African American college students in Greensboro, North Carolina refused to remove themselves from a segregated lunch counter. We assumed the roles of the police officers, college students, waitress, manager, and restaurant attendees in the drama. We re-enacted this drama several times with different students assuming different roles. I concluded the lesson by having
students write reasons why they did or did not think the college students should have removed themselves from the counter or resisted as they did. My intent in this assignment was to engage my students in thinking critically about the consequences of resisting institutional racism.

Lesson 9: Desegregation and Freedom Acquisition

I began this lesson by reviewing the concepts learned in the unit thus far. I introduced the concept of boycott to my students. Then we read and discussed Ringgold’s (1999) book entitled If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks. This piece of realistic fiction discusses the life of Rosa Parks from the perspective of a young child who reflects on her childhood memories while living through the Bus Boycotts of the 1960’s. The process drama involved my students and I pretending to be Rosa Parks and others key figures (bus driver, police officers, passengers, etc.) involved in her historic event on the bus. We discussed our various roles within the drama and ended the lesson by writing a letter to Rosa Parks while in jail. My intent was to engage my students in developing a sense of empathy toward those such as Rosa Parks who have been unfairly persecuted for their efforts toward eradicating racial injustice.

How I Came to Know What I Know: Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1995) define data analysis as “…the process of bringing order, structure and meaning” to collected data (p. 111). To bring order, structure, and meaning to my data I used both grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and writing as a form of self-reflective inquiry (Richardson, 1994). In short, my data analysis process
involved four on-going and reoccurring phases (See Figure 3.2). In keeping with a grounded theory method of data analysis, the first phase involved reading the data in three specific ways as a means of becoming familiar with the data from three different perspectives. First, I read the data chronologically. I used memo writing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to note preliminary findings and changes over time. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain, these memos served as early speculations or contemplations about what was beginning to emerge in the data. The second time I read the data I did so by data source. My intent in doing so was to analyze the data corpus in terms of smaller composite bodies of data. In other words, I analyzed the self-observations, teacher researcher journal entries, student work, and video tapings, as separate yet collective bodies of data. This allowed me to analyze the data in greater depth and place closer attention to what was occurring specifically within each data source. Again, I used memo writing to note emerging thinking, speculations, and contemplations. As with the initial broad reading, I was able to note changes in each data source that occurred chronologically over the course of the study. The third time I read the data was through my self-reflective narratives as the teacher in the study. This allowed me to analyze my narratives in context with the other occurrences in the classroom.

The second phase in my data analysis process involved engaging in both open ended and axial coding (Glaser, 1978) processes. Consistent with the grounded theory data analysis methodology (Glaser, 1978), I began by trying to ‘open up’ as many codes for the data as feasible. This open coding process yielded over 60 different code names. Next, I engaged in axial (Glaser, 1978) or closed ended coding to reduce the large quantity of codes. I collapsed the former and latter codes on the basis of relationship.
For example, I initially created a code known as *divergent questions* and *convergent questions* to signify the types of questions I posed while reading the texts. Later, I decided to collapse both of these codes into a new code known as *textual questions*.

The third phase in my data analysis process involved creating broader categories for the codes I attached to the data. I attempted to better understand my data through thematic analysis (Glaser, 1978). Through thematic analysis, I was able to identify themes and patterns in the data and better understand broader relationships between the separate and fragmented aspects of the data. I eventually settled on developing 4 categories to sort and analyze the data: the nature of critical anti-racist education, student interactions, student thinking, tensions and other. The ‘other’ category represents the outlying data that could not be easily sorted into one of the other 4 categories. Eventually, the data in the ‘other’ category was collapsed into one or more of the other 4 categories.

The fourth phase in my data analysis process involved using narrative inquiry as a means of connecting and weaving the discrete and separate data into a coherent broader story. I frequently reviewed related literature to aid in building valid arguments from the data. I repeated each phase in this series of 4 phases until I felt comfortable enough with my data findings to “act on” it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003 p. 277). Then, I formulated several assertions from the data that were supported by at least three warrants from the data. I used narrative inquiry during this phase to clarify and extend my initial assertions.
Phase 1: Data Reading
- Read data in 3 ways
- Memo notes

Phase 2: Coding
- Open end coding
- Axial coding

Phase 3: Categorizing
- Identifying Themes
- Identified Patterns

Phase 4: Narrative Inquiry
- Constructed Story
- Established Assertions

Figure 3.2: Phases of Data Analyses
Data Representation

Chase (2005) describes narrative inquiry as “an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods—all revolving around and interested in biological particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (p. 651, emphasis mine). Accordingly, based on my central involvement and focus within the study, I choose to write and represent the data using a narrative analysis and style. As both an analytic tool for data analysis and representation, narrative aided me in interpreting and representing my participation in the classroom as I interacted with both my students and the curriculum throughout this study. I constructed six narratives to collectively represent the analysis of findings from the study. In the first narrative I analyze and represent data related to following research question: What is the nature of critical, anti-racist education in this classroom? In contrast, the remaining narratives respond to the specific research questions. These questions are:

1) What instructional challenges and changes occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

2) What developmental challenges and changes in and among my students occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

3) What personal/political challenges occur as I teach critically about African American history?

4) What pragmatic challenges and changes (i.e., classroom, institutional, etc.) occur as I teach critically about African American history?
My goal within these four narratives was to produce self-critical, self-reflective, and somewhat ‘confessional’ (Van Maanen, 1988) accounts of the findings from this study. As a means of increasing my depth of analysis, interpretation, and credibility as the researcher in the study, these four narratives incorporate many of the tensions and challenges yielded from the data. Further, they are meant to be read both individually as a collective whole.

Issues of Credibility, Validity, and Ethics

Because this study employs a qualitative and critical action research approach, credibility/trustworthiness and validity was achieved by adhering to several specific criteria. The criteria used to achieve credibility/trustworthiness include: triangulation, systematicity, and self-reflexivity. In addition, criteria related to process validity and catalytic validity was adhered to in this work.

Triangulation

Two forms of triangulation were used to establish my trustworthiness or credibility within this work. First, I employed data triangulation during my data analysis processes. That is, according to Denzin (1970) data acquired from multiple sources were used to develop themes and patterns during the data analysis process. In addition, I used methodological triangulation to further contribute to the trustworthiness of this study. Denzin (1970) defines methodological triangulation as the process within social inquiry where the researcher includes more than one method in order to ensure validity of the research. In this study, the multiple methods that constituted methodological
triangulation included video recording, observations, and teacher researcher reflexive journaling.

Systematicity

Due to the teacher research design of this study, my credibility/trustworthiness as a researcher was also established through systematicity (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2004). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2004) contend that because the practitioner researcher assumes a dual role of practitioner and researcher within his or her work, systematic data collection is the primary means whereby the ‘insider’ perspective is achieved. Moreover, systematicity becomes extremely important in teacher research as it often substitutes for traditional forms of researcher credibility such as member checking and or peer debriefing. In keeping with their notion of systematicity, I labored to remain ‘systematic’ in my data collection and analysis processes.

Self-Reflexivity

The third means of ensuring my credibility/trustworthiness as the researcher within this inquiry was through the use of critical self-reflection. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986), critical self-reflection increases the credibility of the action researcher in at least two ways. First, it identifies and critiques taken for granted assumptions and practices during the research process. Second, critical self-reflections work to eliminate self-deception and or misrepresentations of events and people that are occurring within the inquiry. I engaged in critical self-reflection related to my roles as both the teacher
and researcher in the study in my teacher researcher journal. Further, I used these notes to better inform both my methodological and pedagogical practices.

*Process Validity*

Given the critical action research methodological design of this inquiry, criteria related to process validity was used to contribute to the validity of this study. Herr and Anderson (2005) define process validity as the “…extent problems are framed and solved in a manner that permits ongoing learning of the individual or system” (p. 55). In keeping with this assertion, process validity was determined by the degree to which my overarching research design and plan of action served as a medium for on-going learning about my self as a teacher using critical and anti-racist pedagogy.

*Catalytic Validity*

Criteria related to catalytic validity were also used to contribute to the validity of this inquiry. Lather (1986) defines catalytic validity as “…the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it” (p. 272). To this end, Herr and Anderson (2005) point out that catalytic validity applies to both the researchers and participants involved in the inquiry. In this sense, catalytic validity was the degree to which my participation in this study transformed my current understandings of drama as a form of critical and anti-racist pedagogy within my own teaching practice. Further, because the data from this inquiry expanded and transformed my prior knowledge related to critical and anti-racist pedagogies, it can be deemed to have catalytic validity.
Ethics

To maintain the identity of all parties involved in this study, I used pseudonyms during data representation. Moreover, I honored the parent’s wish for her child not to participate in the study by preparing an alternative location for him during each lesson. Prior to implementing each lesson, I politely asked that student to leave the class and join the class in session next door. In an effort to keep this child from feeling mistreated, I asked the teacher in that classroom to allow him to have ‘free-time’ on the computer. He was asked to rejoin our class during the language arts portion of the lessons. Further, having discussed the methodology involved in this research I now proceed with a discussion of the findings in chapter 4.
The central research question that drives this study is: How does teaching critically about African American history influence the perspectives and understandings in my 1st grade classroom? Other more specific questions include:

1). What is the nature of critical, anti-racist pedagogy in this classroom?

2). What instructional challenges and changes occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

3). What developmental challenges and changes in and among my students occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?

4). What personal/political challenges occur as I teach critically about African American history?

5). What pragmatic challenges and changes (i.e., classroom, institutional etc.) occur as I teach critically about African American history?
Based on the aforementioned research questions, this chapter is divided into 6 distinct yet overlapping narratives. I choose this format to better highlight the events that happened throughout this study. These narratives are presented as layers of analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that constitute the larger analysis. There are meant to be read both individually and collectively; both in part and as a whole. The first narrative attends to the first research question as it addresses the ways in which my students and I developed higher levels of critical racial consciousness (Freire, 1972; Bush, 2001) through the use of dialogue. In this sense, the first narrative can be thought of as a discussion of what transpired between the students and I as we engaged in the unit. Thus, our (my students and I) interactions with each other and the curriculum become the unit of analysis within this first narrative. In contrast, the remaining narratives respond to the other specific research questions as they present the challenges I faced as I engaged in preparing and teaching the unit. As such, the second narrative discusses the challenges I encountered related to what event and perspectives to include/exclude in the unit. The third narrative discusses the tensions that developed out of my pre-conceived notions of my students’ racial knowledge. The fourth narrative discusses the challenges I faced as I worked to expand my students’ thinking beyond dichotomized notions of racial justice. The fifth narrative, discusses the tensions that arouse between some White parents and I as a result of the content presented in the unit. Finally, the last narrative discusses the tensions that developed out of a personal and political responsibility I felt as African American teaching predominately African American children about race. Collectively, these narratives suggest both the powerful yet equally tension filled nature of employing
critical, anti-racist pedagogy in an early childhood classroom. Having established the outline of this chapter, I now present the first narrative.

Narrative 1: ‘Why did they try to hang his head from a tree?’

Freire (1972) defines critical consciousness as the ability to discern social, political, and economic oppression in society through on-going critical reflection and dialogue about the nature of reality. Moreover, Brush (2001) defines racial consciousness as a process of developing an oppositional and politicized consciousness of race and racism. To this end, she points out that race consciousness means that “…race is understood as a central constituent of identity, that race is, or becomes, recognized as a basis of domination and privilege, and that racism becomes a point of resistance” (p.171). Utilizing both of these notions as theoretical frameworks in this narrative, I explain how dialogue worked in varied ways to contribute to increased levels of what I call critical racial consciousness in this unit. Drawing from and extending Freire’s and Brush’s notions of critical and racial consciousness, I define critical racial consciousness, as utilized in this analysis, as the process of developing an oppositional and politicized consciousness of race and racism in society. Moreover, this includes recognizing race as a central part of all aspects and processes within society (both past and present) and thereby existing as a site of domination, marginalization, critique, and resistance. In the sections that follow, I discuss how dialogue contributed to the development of critical racial consciousness in my classroom as it operated and was used as: a) a means of contextualizing learning; b) a means of critical illumination (Freire, 1972); c) and a means of critical knowledge construction.
I began each of the lessons with a pre-text discussion (See Table 3.1). Within these pre-text discussions, I posed questions to build background knowledge related to the upcoming lessons. During the early portion of the unit, these pre-text portions of the lessons were used to introduce my students to the racial concepts and information I planned to discuss in each text. Assuming that my students had little or no background information related to much of the racial information to be presented in the lessons, I used this portion of the lessons to situate particular vocabulary and concepts needed to better understand and participate in the lessons. Consequently, much of the early pre-text dialogue consisted primarily of me speaking and the children listening intently. In these instances dialogue worked to *contextualize* or provide a background for subsequent concepts, texts and lessons. This first use of dialogue as a means of contextualizing learning is illustrated in the following transcript of a pre-text portion of Lesson 1: Origins, Beginnings of Slavery.

**Mr. H.**[^3]: Okay boys and girls! Today what we are going to do is talk a little bit about African American history. About from the beginning of African American history … where it started from…[^4] and all the way up to present day. A long long time ago, all African-American people …. or all Black people lived on a continent called Africa. Everybody say Africa.

[^3]: From this point and hereafter ‘Teacher’ refers to me as the teacher/researcher in this study.
[^4]: The ellipses represent a short pause while speaking.
**Class**⁵: (In unison) Africa

**Mr. H.**: The continent of Africa has a lot of different countries. It is the largest continent. And a lot of White people lived on the continent called Europe. Everybody say Europe.

**Class**: (In unison) Europe

**Mr. H.**: And they wanted to have some workers or some servants…and they wanted to find a way to find cheap labor…and they wanted people to work without having to spend a lot of money. So they decided to start something called slavery. Everybody say slavery.

**Class**: (In unison) Slavery

**Mr. H.**: And slavery is when you force people to work for little or no money. And what they decided to do is to go to Africa…on a boat…take many of the African people over to America and make them work the land…to pick cotton…to pick a lot of other kinds of resources to be able to sell. Because they decided rather than do it themselves, they could find people to do it for them…and they could save a lot of money by being able to make other people work for them…and pick their crops and sell them in the marketplace. Now let’s listen. (I begin reading the text) (Lesson 1, Video Transcript).

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⁵ The term ‘Class’ refers to the entire class speaking at once. Psydoneums in the form of initials were used to refer to instances where specific students are speaking.
During this early lesson within the unit, I assumed a more active and dominant role within the discussion. I did most of the communicating while the students listened actively. At first glance, one might assume that this early exchange between my students and I is not very dialogic in nature; rather, it seems to be more like a monologue. Yet, as Freire (1972) explains, dialogue is a process wherein two parties acknowledge the contributions of the other through faith, love, and humility [emphasis mine]. In this sense, dialogue is as much about speaking as it is about allowing one to speak. Thus, it can be said that within this instance my students were acknowledging my contributions to the discussion of African American history. As the unit progressed, dialogue within the pre-text discussions expanded and was also used to review previously discussed racial information and concepts. I posed questions to evoke children’s thinking related to previously discussed concepts. Having engaged in previous lessons, the students became more involved in the pre-text discussions. In these instances, the pre-text dialogue became more mutually participative. It was herein that I began to acknowledge the contributions of my students as Freire (1972) explains. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from the pre-text discussion during Lesson 3: Plantation Life:

**Mr. H.**: Now, today we are going to be talking a little bit more about African American history. So far, we learned a lot of different things. Raise your hand if you can tell us…what continent did slavery begin?

(Several students raise their hands) (I point to L.J.)

**L.J.**: North America
Mr. H.: Not North America

L.J.: I said South America

Mr. H.: Not South America... Where did they go? Where did the slaves come from? What continent did the slaves come from?

A.D.: They came from Africa

Teacher: Very good! They came from Africa. Give him a hand.

(The group claps for the student who answered correctly)

Mr. H.: And... they took them over to some parts of North America and Central American and some parts of South America. And then they rode on special kinds of ships. Raise your hand if you can tell us what those kinds of ships were called?... What were those ships called?

(Several students raise their hands) (I point to A.L.)

A.L.: Slave ships

Mr. H.: Very good! Those ships were called slave ships.

(The group claps for the student who answered correctly)

Mr. H.: Who can tell me what those conditions were like on the slave ships?

(Several students raise their hands) (I point to N.O.)
N.O.  The Door of No Return was very dark…and people were squished on top of each other.

Mr. H.:  Very good!  He said the Door of Return was very dark and that people were squished on top of each other…Who can tell me anything else they remember about slavery?

(The other students keep their hands raised) (I point to A.L.)

A.L.:  A lot of the people never came back.

Mr. H.:  Okay, a lot of the people never came to Africa again.  Okay, A.L. what can you tell us?

A.L.:  Some people jumped off the boat

Mr. H.:  Okay, some people jumped off the boat…what else?

What can you tell us?  What do you remember A.D.?

(I point to A.D.)

A.D.:  Some of them had to eat different food.

Mr. H.:  That some of them had to eat different food…they didn’t have a lot of food to eat.  I.J. what do you remember?

I.J.:  I remember that they were squished together on the slave ship.

Mr. H.:  Okay, you said you remember that they were squished together on the slave ship.  A.M. what do you remember?
A.M.: I remember that they couldn’t go to the bathroom…And that they were dying and some of them jumped off the ship

Mr. H.: Okay you said some of them were dying…and they weren’t allowed to go to the bathroom. And some of them jumped off the ship…Okay one more…G.P.

G.P. Some of them used weapons

Mr. H.: Some of them used different weapons when they wanted to fight the slave masters on the ship…that was called a slave revolt.

(I point to D.J.)

D.J.: What about when it rained?

Mr. H.: When it rained they still didn’t let them get off of the ship. Okay…what we’re going to do is learn a little bit more about when they got to America…where they lived at…and what they did. They lived on a special place called a plantation. Everybody say plantation.

Class: Plantation.

Mr. H.: This was a place where they worked at all day…and night in many cases…and what life was like. While they were working there they were picking cotton and other kinds of crops in order to be sold by slave masters.

(I begin reading the text) (Lesson 5, Video Transcript).
What becomes more apparent in this transcript is that the nature of the pre-text dialogue is shifting from being teacher led to more egalitarian in nature. Through the process of posing primarily recall questions based on previous lessons, the students and I were able to participate in a more egalitarian dialogue related to the topic of African American history. Moreover, this process of posing primarily review questions not only allowed students to participate more fully in the pre-text discussion, but it also contextualized the subsequent textual discussions.

Near the latter portion of the study, the students began using the pre-text portion of the lesson to pose questions of their own. While much of the earlier pre-text dialogue was led by me, it was here that students began to lead the dialogue. Essentially, the students initiated the questions and I responded. The more responses I supplied the more questions the students posed. This is exemplified in the following video transcript of Lesson 4: Slave Resistance and Escape:

**Mr. H.:** Okay boys and girls! In the first lesson we talked a little bit about the continent where slavery began. Where did slavery begin?

(Several students raise their hands)

**Mr. H.:** A.D. (I point to AD)

**A.D.:** East America?

**Mr. H.:** Not East America. Where did slavery begin?

(More students raise their hands)
A.L. North America?

Mr. H.: Not North America?

Mr. H.: Where did they go and pick them up from?...Where did they go? (I point to C.Y.)

C.Y.: Africa?

Mr. H.: Africa! Very good! Give C.Y. a hand.

(The class claps to celebrate C.Y.’s correct response)

Mr. H.: Then they took them over to the America’s (I point to the map on the presentation board.)...Some parts of North America...Some parts of South America...some parts of Central America....How did they transport them?...What did they take them in? (Even more students raise their hands) (I point to A.M.)

A.M.: The slave ship

Mr. H.: Very good! Let’s give her a hand.

(The group claps to celebrate)

Mr. H.: And...there were hundreds of thousands of slaves aboard slave ships (Lesson 4, Video Transcript).

As consistent in the previous transcript, the pre-text dialogue embodied many review questions. This form of questioning drew students into the dialogue as several students raise their hands to supply answers to the questions I posed. Although two
students submit the incorrect response to the question, they are, nonetheless, undiscouraged as the pre-text discussion has now become a safe place where students can feel free to supply answers to questions without risk of any form of sanction. Interestingly, as the pre-text dialogue ensues, the role of dialogue leader begins to shift. The students become so deeply engaged in the dialogue that they begin posing more questions for me to answer than the number of questions I am posing for them to answer. The nature of the dialogue has shifted from being lead and directed by me to being lead and directed by the students. This shift is seen in the remainder of this pre-text discussion:

**Mr. H.**: Why do you think they kept the Underground Railroad a secret?

(I point to D.A..)

**D.A.**: So nobody would know where it was at…

**Mr. H.**: Yeah…so no body would know where it was at…So the slave masters wouldn’t know where it was at…because if the slave masters found out they would take the slaves and punish them for trying to escape

(Several students raise their hands) (I point to M.W.)

**M.W.**: And sometimes they would cut off their foots!

**Mr. H.**: She said sometimes they would cut off their feet. (I point to A.W.)

**A.W.**: They would use knives to cut off their heads.

**Mr. H.**: She said they would use knives to cut off their heads
A.L.: And sometimes they would cut off your hand.

Mr. H.: Very good…they would cut off your hands…They would use them as an example. So, let’s say that N.O. was a slave and tried to escape and the slave master caught him (the other students giggle at their classmate being referred to as a slave hypothetically)...they would treat him badly to show all of the other slaves what would happen if they tried to escape.

A.D.: If all of the White people knew their slaves ran away, would they get into a fight with the other slaves?

Mr. H.: He said if all of the White people knew their slaves ran away…would they get into a fight with the other slaves? Yeah they would be very angry.

(Four other students raise their hands to contribute to the discussion) (I point to G.P.)

G.P.: When they were picking cotton, did they ever sleep?

Mr. H.: She said when they were picking cotton did they ever sleep?...
Um…sometimes they slept, but a lot of times they did not let them sleep for long periods of time. One more…(I signal the last student to be called) (I point to A.L.)

A.L.: If they found them trying to escape…they might make them work even harder.
Mr. H.: Okay…she said that if they found them trying to escape on the Underground Railroad they might make them work even harder. (I point to L.J.)

L.J.: If they found out where it was…they may try to go there too.

Mr. H.: She said that if they found out where it was they might try to go there too. Let us read the story (Lesson 4, Video Transcript).

Shor and Freire (1987) point out that within a dialogue the “…knowledge of the object to be known is not the sole possession of the teacher, who gives knowledge to the students in a gracious gesture. Instead of this cordial gift of information to students, the object to be known mediates the two cognitive subjects” (p. 99). In other words, what is to be known within a dialogic interaction is seen as occurring through mutual inquiry and interaction between students and teachers. Accordingly, we see in these transcripts how our roles (my students and I) within the pre-text discussion shifted over the course of the unit. Over time, my students assume a more active role and, consequently, a more powerful position within the pre-text discussions. Further, as a result of this shift in power, participation, and position within the pre-text discussions, my students move from merely responding to critical questions to posing critical questions of their own.

*So what happened if the slave masters saw her: Racial illumination through textually mediated dialogue*

Following the pre-text dialogical discussions, my students and I engaged in reading and interacting with the texts related to that particular day’s learning objectives (See Table 3.1). During these textual interactions, I labored to maintain a dialogical
relationship between the text, my students, and myself. I assumed as Freire and Macedo (1987) explain, readers learn more and are able to contribute more when textual interactions are structured in ways that allow the text and the reader to speak back and forth to each other. Thus, I intentionally positioned myself in this way with the texts and my students to de-center my position as the sole source of knowledge on this subject. Within these textually mediated dialogues, I worked to increase the levels of critical racial consciousness in and among my students through the process of what I call racial illumination. Extending Freire’s (1972) notion of illumination as the process of drawing attention to specific historical events, figures, perspectives, and power dynamics that may not necessarily be highlighted within the text, I sought to specifically emphasize and highlight racial perspectives, events, and power relationships within the texts that are or may be typically ignored/omitted within mainstream approaches to multicultural education. More specifically, as I read the texts within the unit, I stopped regularly and often to underscore particular aspects of the text I deemed important for my students to gain additional and deeper levels of understanding of the material presented in the texts. As the students posed questions, I used my personal and cultural knowledge of African American history to engage my students in a deeper dialogue beyond what was written in the texts. This is seen in the following video transcript of Lesson 5: Anti-Slavery Abolitionists Movement:

**Mr. H.:** The title of the story is called *A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman* by David A. Adler…illustrated by Samuel A. Bird.
(I set the book aside and begin illuminating Harriet Tubman’s role in the Underground Railroad)

**Mr. H.:** And…like I said before, Harriet Tubman is very important, because she helped a lot of slaves escape…What she would do was…she would take a group of slaves in the night and they would follow her.. and she would lead them the way to freedom…because they went to some of the free states where slaves were free…and she would go back and get more and more slaves…and she kept going back and forth and getting more slaves.

**G.P.:** So what happened if the slave masters saw her?

**Mr. H.:** A lot of the slave masters never saw her because she went at night time.

(Lesson 5, Video Transcript).

Early in this textual interaction, I place the book aside and begin discussing Harriet Tubman’s significant role within the history of the Underground Railroad. In addition, I explicate the ways in which she would travel back and forth between free and slave states while leading groups of slaves to freedom. When one student poses a critical question related to the consequences of Harriet Tubman’s actions, I further explain that she was never caught on the Underground Railroad by slave masters. What is important in this exchange is that we have yet to actually read the book. Essentially, through dialogue based in illumination of racial information not necessarily explicit in the text, we are beginning to formulate an additional text around the topic of the Underground
Mr. H.: (I begin reading the text. I stop after 2 pages of text and begin illuminating how slaves became slaves.)

Now…a lot of slaves were born into slavery…that means that if your mother and father were slaves then you were automatically slaves.

Mr. H.: (I continue reading about Harriet Tubman’s resistant behavior. I stop reading and begin illuminating the differences between field slaves and house slaves and Harriet Tubman’s life as a house slave). Now there were slaves who worked outside…those were called field hands. There were some slaves who worked inside of the house. They had different jobs. If you worked inside of the house you weren’t allowed to eat the same food as your master. So one day she decided I want to eat some of this sugar. And her mistress whipped her. You can see a picture of her getting whipped right here (I point to picture in the text) (Lesson 5, Video Transcript).

In this example, I stop after reading a few pages of text to illuminate particular racialized events and figures in the text. In this case, I elaborate the differences between house slaves and field hands along with the nature of Harriet Tubman’s disposition. This process develops further in the remaining portion of this textual interaction:

Mr. H.: (I continue reading the text. I stop when I encounter a portion of the text pertaining to the abolitionists. I place the book aside and begin discussing the
term abolitionist in greater detail.) Now…there were a lot of abolitionists. Those were people who hated slavery. Some of those people were White and some of those people were Black. And they decided slavery wasn’t a good thing…so sometimes they wrote signs against slavery…sometimes they wrote messages and different things against slavery.

**Mr. H.:** (I pick up the book and continue reading. I stop shortly after reading about Nat Turner and place the book down again to illuminate his role and relationship within the Abolitionist s Movement). Now this person’s name is Nat Turner. He was a slave too. And he decided to lead what is called a rebellion. Everybody say rebellion.

**Class:** Rebellion

**Mr. H.:** That’s when people have rules and you decide that you’re gonna break all of the rules. He was a slave and didn’t like being a slave and he was going to get all of the slaves to leave but they got him and they killed him.

**Mr. H.:** (I continue reading 1 more page about Harriet Tubman and then stop and explain the information presented in the text in greater detail) So they had a weight and it almost killed her.

**A.M.:** (Raises her hand)

**Mr. H.:** (Points to A.M.)

**A.M.:** Did she die?
Mr. H.: She died eventually, but not yet in this book.

Mr. H.: (I continue reading 1 page and stopped and explained) So she wanted to escape but her husband…he didn’t want to escape…he wanted to stay. And he told Harriet if you try to escape I’m gonna tell the master and the police and everybody will come looking for you.

Mr. H. (I continue reading 2 more pages and then stop and add more information not in the text.) Let me stop here for a second. The slaves…sometimes while they were working…they would be singing songs…but the master didn’t know they were really talking to each other. The master thought they were just singing songs…but it was a way for them to talk. So, when she sang the song, “I’m Going to Leave You, I’m Bound for the Promise Land”, she was really telling them I am going to try to escape later on tonight. The slave master didn’t know. They thought they were just songs, but they were a secret way of talking.

Mr. H.: (I continue reading 2 more pages)

A.D.: What did that mean? (Referring to the words “I will have liberty or death! as spoken by Harriet Tubman in the text)

Mr. H.: That means she either wanted to be free or she wanted to die. She didn’t want to live as a slave anymore.

(T.H. raises her hand.)

T.H.: What did you say they threw on her head? (Referring to a statement 2
Mr. H.: They threw weights on her head. (I point to A.J.)

A.J: What are those things?

Mr. H.: Those are things people use when they are balancing things on a scale.

A.D.: When they ran away, did some of them get hurt really bad?

Mr. H.: His question was did they get hurt really bad if they ran away. Un huh…some of them got hurt and some of them got hung.

Mr. H.: (I continue reading 2 more pages and then stop to illuminate more racial information not in the text) What would happen was…they would run away to the houses of abolitionists…who didn’t think slavery was right…and they would tell whoever was with her which houses were safe…and she went from one house to another house to another house and eventually she made it up North where she could be free.

Mr. H.: (I continue reading 2 more pages and then stop to illuminate more racial information not in the text) So…even though she was free…she would go back down South and get some of her family members who were not free…and eventually she led 300 people to freedom.

AD: If her slave master found her would he try to injure her?

Teacher: Her slave master never found her, but if he found her he would probably try to punish her.
(Lesson 4, Video Transcript)

Dilg (1999) points out that it is more common for multicultural teachers to teach about race than through race. That is, they (teachers) tend to discuss race and racism from dominant perspectives; which in turn reifies notions of White supremacy. Thus, she suggests that teachers discuss race and racism in ways that center the racialized perspectives and knowledge bases of people from marginalized groups as a means of both enriching and broadening what we know and understand about race and racism. Using my cultural knowledge of African American history as that center of reference as Dilg suggests, I was able to underscore and elaborate particular aspects of African American history that were implicit in the texts. By using racialized perspectives and events as the center (as opposed to the margins) of these textual and dialogic exchanges, my students and I were able to construct and participate in a deeper and more expansive discussion of racial oppression that reached farther than the information printed in the texts. Further, this process of illuminating racial content, perspectives, figures, and events implicit in the texts through dialogic interactions contributed to increased critical racial consciousness in and among the students in my classroom.

Think about how they took them out and what they did to the people: Dramatic dialogue as a tool for critical racial knowledge construction

Upon completing the textual interactions, my students and I entered into two or more inquiry-based process drama activities in each lesson (See Table 3.1). These drama activities required my students and I to draw from information, perspectives, and concepts presented in previous texts and lessons to construct critical racial knowledge
related to many of the perspectives, events, and tensions embedded in various aspects of African American history. After developing critical racial knowledge related to many of these issues and perspectives, students were further asked to construct hypothetical solutions to many of these competing perspectives and historical dilemmas. Within these drama interactions, dialogue played important roles as it as was to: a) frame and facilitate problem-posing inquiry; b) communicate assumed (pretended) perspectives; and c) communicate potential solutions to problems. A clear example of the drama activity and the role of dialogue as a means of framing and facilitating problem-posing inquiry is seen in the following transcript of Lesson 7: Reconstruction. Having read and dialogued about the role and impact of the Klu Klux Klan during the Reconstruction period in history, we now begin the process drama activities as such:

Mr. H.: Okay everybody stand up.

(All of the children stand up where they are on the carpet.)

Mr. H.: Everybody stretch.

(Everyone raises his or her hands toward the ceiling and stretches.)

Mr. H.: (I divide students into two groups. Group 1 consists of 4 students and group 2 consists of the remaining students in the class. The two groups are positioned parallel to each other.). Now…we talked about something called Night Rides. That was when someone would come in (I point to group 2) and drag them (I point to group 1) out of their house. Some of the Klansmen (I point to group 2)
would take the Black people who were in their houses and drag them outside (I point to group 1).

Mr. H.: You’re going to imagine that you are all Klansmen…that you belong to the Klan (I point to group 2).

Mr. H.: Your going to imagine that you are Black people in your house (points to group 1). You are going to imagine you are sitting at a table (I grab 4 nearby chairs and motion children to sit). You are gonna be the mother…you are gonna be the father…and you will be the children.

(Students begin laughing at role assignments)

Mr. H.: Now…is that how you act at the dinner table? Close your eyes…and then open them and begin eating dinner.

(Students begin pretending to eat dinner)

Mr. H.: (I turn to group 2 and begin explaining their roles) You’re gonna come through the door and take them out. Think about how they took them out and what they did to the people. Everyone close your eyes and when I count to 3 open them and begin (Lesson 7, Video Transcript).

Thus far, we see here how dialogue is being used to both frame and facilitate the problem-posed inquiry embedded in this dramatic activity. I begin by using dialogue to ‘set-up’ the dramatic frame wherein the students subsequently participated. Then I used dialogue to re-focus students’ attention toward the activity at-hand. Next, I used dialogue
to contextualize the drama to be enacted as well as assign various roles to the students. This dramatic dialogue allowed me to draw students’ attention toward a specific event within history and encourage them to think critically about the multiple perspectives involved within this event. In a sense, the first portion of the dramatic activities can be thought of as me initiating a dialogue with my students, while the second portion can be thought of as my students response within the dialogue. Their response is witnessed in the remaining portion of this video transcript:

**Mr. H.:** …5,4,3,2,1…

(Students in group 2 run over and begin attacking students in group 1. Group 1 is taken out of their pre-tend house as consistent with the material acquired through the textual dialogue)

**Mr. H.:** Freeze! 1,2,3…eyes on me!

(Students stop and give me their full attention)

**Mr. H.:** Now were going to imagine that M.W. is a runaway slave and she is walking down the street by herself. (I separate M.W. from the rest of the group). Everybody else will be Klansmen. Think about what would happen if they saw her walking all alone…when I give you the signal…Remember M.W. is a runaway slave and everybody else is a Klansman. Ok…go ahead (I snap my fingers to give students the signal to begin)

(The class runs toward M.W. and takes her down to the carpet)
Mr. H.: Stop!

(The students all stop instantly)

Mr. H.: Let’s all have a seat back on the carpet and discuss what happened.

(Students sit back down on the carpet and they begin discussing the drama activity)

In this remaining portion of the transcript of this drama activity, I set the scene for students to inquire critically about the nature of the Klu Klux Klan and the terrorism they perpetrated on many African Americans during the Reconstruction era in history. Again, dialogue played a vital role in the activity as it helped to focus the students’ attention in a specific direction. Moreover, it aided them in thinking about how to ‘act’ or what decisions to make within the drama. While it may appear that the students are merely enacting a particular role within this drama, it must not be overlooked that this role is in response to an initial question posed by me. Consequently, in this sense, the roles the students assume can be viewed as a form of communicating within a larger dialogue between them and me.

In addition to being used to frame problem-posed inquiry, dialogue was also used as a tool for critical racial knowledge construction by aiding my students in both understanding and communicating the perspectives of various historical figures associated with particular moments within African American history. In other words, dialogue was used by my students during the drama exercises to think critically about the various perspectives of individuals involved within a particular conflicting racialized
historical event. A clear example of this is seen in the following video transcript of Lesson 9: Freedom Acquisition:

(Having just read and dialogued about the historical event known as the ‘Lunch Counter Sit-In’, I begin by selecting volunteers to enact the various perspectives in this drama activity.)

Mr. H.: We’re going to enact the restaurant where those four men were arrested during the Sit-In. We need four people who are going to be sitting at our lunch counter.

(Students raise their hands to volunteer)

Mr. H.: Those people are going to imagine they are at the lunch counter…remember we need people who are going to pretend…who are going to use their imaginations…they don’t all have to be boys…they can be girls too, because we are just pretending.

(I identify and select 4 students and instruct them to sit in 4 chairs that have been selected to serve as the lunch counter in the scene.)

Mr. H.: Now we need one person who is going to be the waitress. When you go to a restaurant, the waitress is the person who comes over and helps you and takes your order and says how can I help you?…what do you want? Now remember the waitress didn’t want to serve them. We’re going to think about what the waitress said to them. What do you think the waitress said to them V.V.?
V.V.: I’m not going to serve you?

Mr. H.: I’m not going to serve you. Who would like to be the waitress? Okay

V.V. you can be the waitress. The waitress will be over here. (I escort V.V. to the far left portion of the room to stand) Here’s the notepad when you come and take someone’s order (I hand V.V. a loose sheet of notebook paper to serve as the pretend notepad for taking orders from patrons)

Mr. H.: Now…who wants to be the police officers?

(Students raise their hands to volunteer)

Mr. H.: (I select 4 students and escort them to the far right corner of the room to stand) Who wants to be the manager? I.J. you can be the manager? (I escort I.J. to a vacant corner of the room) Now the other people are going to be at the table eating their food. (I escort the rest of the class to the desks in the middle portion of the classroom) You are all at the tables at the restaurant.

Mr. H.: Now I’m going to give you 1 minute to think about and whisper to the people in your group about what you’re gonna say…Talk about it with your people.

(Students begin dialoging with each other with respect to their roles and the perspectives embedded in each role. I circulate around the room and dialogue with each group.)

(After several minutes of discussion, the scene begins.)
Mr. H.: Here we go…were gonna count down from five. I will give you the signal. Here we go…five, four, three, two, one. Go ahead waitress.

V.V.: (As the waitress) What are ya’ll doing here? (Communicating to the 4 students enacting the 4 college students)

D.J.: I’m trying to get some food…that’s what we doing!

Mr. H.: What else did the waitress say? (I use dialogue to push V.V’s. thinking.)

V.V.: Get outta here!

Mr. H.: Okay manager…let’s see what the manager does

I.J.: (As the manager) Ya’ll betta get outta here before I call the police!

(The 4 college students, manager, and the waitress begin arguing with each other)

Mr. H.: Okay police

(The students who are pretending to be the police quickly ascend to the scene and begin arresting the 4 college students)

Mr. H.: Okay…White people

(Students posing as White restaurant patrons begin shouting. Several students actually get up and move toward the 4 college students being arrested.)

Teacher: Okay…STOP! FREEZE…Five, four, three, two, one…give yourself a hand for that.
(The students applaud each others’ participation in the drama.) (Video transcript, lesson 9)

We see here how dialogue is being used to help students think and communicate critically about the varying racial perspectives involved within a particular historical event. Upon assigning students to particular roles and groups within the drama exercise, I encouraged students to dialogue amongst each other to consider the ways in which they would enact their roles; and consequently the ways in which varied and even competing perspectives existed within this historical event. Like several other drama exercises within this unit, this activity involved students enacting more than 2 roles. As a result, the students are confronted with multiple perspectives that embody this event in history—namely, the waitress, police officers, 4 college students, and White restaurant patrons. Next, this process becomes additionally layered as I walk around the room and dialogue with each group about their thinking and the perspective involved in each particular role to be enacted. Finally, while enacting various roles within the drama, I dialogue with my students in order to extend their thinking and maintain the continuity and momentum of the exercise. Further, it is through participation in this and similar types of dramatic activities (via the use of dialogue) that critical thinking and communication related to the plural perspectives embedded within a singular historical event emerge.

In addition to being used as a form of problem-posing inquiry and to identify and articulate multiple perspectives, dialogue was also used (as a tool for critical knowledge construction) to communicate potential solutions to historical problems within the dramatic exercises in the unit. After being confronted with the conflicting and multiple
perspectives that existed within many historical events, I frequently asked the students to enact a solution to these conflicts while considering the perspectives and individuals involved. An early example of this is seen in Lesson 3: Plantation Life. Having discussed the nature of life for many slaves and slave masters working on slave plantations, I ask my students to enact a possible solution to this conflict. They respond to this challenge as follows:

(I divide the students into two groups and line each group up side by side. The two groups stand parallel to each other. One group represents the slave masters and the other group represents the slaves.)

Mr. H.: (I point to one side) This side will be the slaves. Think about what the slaves did. This side will be the slave masters (I point to the other side). This side will be the slave masters. I’m gonna be a slave (I join the side representing the slaves). Think about what they did when I count down.
Five..four..three..two..one..

(The students begin moving toward each other. The students enact the slave perspectives by pretending to pick cotton. The other group (slave masters) begin charging violently toward the students pretending to be slaves and pretend to be whipping the slaves)

Teacher: Okay…stop. One, two, three, eyes on me!

(The students stop and focus their attention on me).
Mr. H.: Now...this last time...we are all going to be slaves. Think about what you would do as a slave in this situation. Some slaves stayed there (on plantations) and some tried to escape. Think about what you would have done. If you’re gonna stay...stay here and pick cotton, but if you’re gonna leave then leave over here (I point to a vacant area of the room)

Mr. H.: Okay...five, four, three, two, one, go...

(The students consider the possibilities and make their decisions. Most students flee to the vacant portion of the room that represents escaping the plantation.

Two students remain on the plantation.)

Mr. H.: (After every student has settled on a decision and a place in the room)
FREEZE! Okay...now everyone back over here.

(The students reassemble themselves on the carpet and we begin dialoging about the dramatic exercise.) (Lesson 3, Video Transcript.)

We see in this example the third way in which dialogue was used as tool for critical knowledge construction. That is, dialogue was used to aid students in considering and communicating possible solutions to conflicting perspectives and events within history. The students begin this drama exercise by identifying and encountering the conflicting perspectives extant between the slaves and the slave masters who lived and worked on plantations in the South. Through pretend, the students think critically about what each of these perspectives represent in relationship to the other. During the final dramatic exercise, all of the students assume the role of slaves. It is here that they are
confronted with solving the problem of inhumane work conditions as a slave. I challenged the students to think about two possible solutions (to stay or to leave) to this ethical and moral dilemma that plagued so many African slaves. By forcing students to make a choice and then act based on this choice, each student had to closely consider the positive and negative consequences associated with both choices. Further, in doing so, they inevitably came to better understand.

*Why did it feel good: Reflective dialogue as a means of clarifying and problematizing consciousness*

Before we engaged in the drama activities and prior to the final language arts portion of each lesson, my students and I engaged in what I refer to as *reflective dialogue* (See Table 3.1). I classify this dialogue as reflective dialogue mainly because the nature of these particular dialogical exchanges required my students to reflect critically on a recent activity (i.e., texts, discussion, drama activity, etc.) and use the insight gained through reflection within the present discussion. These reflective dialogues occurred both before and after the dramatic exercises. Throughout the unit these reflective dialogic exchanges were used to both clarify and extend (problematize) my students’ thinking. That is, I used these reflective dialogues as an opportunity to respond in greater detail to the questions that arouse from the texts and or drama activities in an effort to build deeper understanding. Moreover, I used these reflective dialogues as an opportunity to problematize (Freire, 1972) or critique students’ thinking as a means of invoking additional perspectives into the discussions. To this end, Freire (1972) explains problematization as the process of being critical about articulated beliefs, perspectives,
and ideologies (both in written and verbal form) as a means of identifying injustice. A clear illustration of the way in which this reflective dialogue was used to clarify my student’s thinking and understanding is seen in Lesson 7: Reconstruction:

(I finished reading the last sentence in the text and closed the book.)

**Mr. H.**: Does anybody have any questions about what was happening so far?

You have a question? (I point to N.O.)

**N.O.**: Why did they try to hang his head off a tree when he didn’t do anything?

**Mr. H.**: His question was why did they try to hang his head off a tree when he didn’t do anything? Well…the reason they tried to hang people is because they wanted to set an example…they wanted to show other Black people that if you tried to do something wrong, this is what would happen to you. They wanted to make all of the other Black people afraid. (I point to A.D.)

**A.D.**: What about if they told them where were the other Black people houses?

**Mr. H.**: His question was what would happen if they told them where the other houses were? Ah…sometimes they would still terrorize them. (I point to G.P.)

**G.P.**: What would happen if the White people told where they were having the meeting?

**Mr. H.**: What would happen if they told where the secret hiding places were?

**G.P.**: Yeah
Mr. H.: They would get hurt too. Sometimes they would get kicked out of the Klan. (I point to A.J.)

A.J.: What would they do to the Black people?

Mr. H.: Sometimes they would hang Black people (I point to V.V.)

V.V.: Did they burn the tree sometimes?

Mr. H.: His question was did they burn the tree sometimes? Yes they burned the tree sometimes too. They would burn the body and they would burn the tree to set an example. (I point to L.J.)

L.J.: Why did they choke them?

Mr. H.: They would choke them to kill them and to set an example.

(I end the pre-drama dialogue and begin the drama activity)

In this example, we see how my students and I engaged in a dialogue to clarify their thinking related to the recently discussed textual information. Having recently read/dialogued about the Klu Klux Klan, I begin the dialogue by asking if anyone had any questions. Several students pose questions directly related to textual information. As I supplied answers to their questions, we begin to dialogue in greater depth about the horrific nature of the Klux Klux Klan and their relationship to and with freed slaves.

In addition to being used as a means of clarifying students’ thinking, these reflective dialogues were also used to extend or problematize (Freire, 1972) my students’ thinking. Often and throughout the unit, I used these reflective dialogues as opportunities
to ‘push’ my students’ thinking beyond the current levels. In a Vygotskian (1978) sense, it can be said that while engaging in many of these reflective dialogues I attempted to ‘scaffold’ their thinking toward higher levels of cognitive functioning. However, because my explicit goal within these reflective dialogues was to critique the power relationships as presented in the texts and dramas, these post-drama dialogue can, additionally, be thought of as spaces where I worked to problematize (Freire, 1972) their thinking toward developing critical racial consciousness. One example of the way these reflective dialogues served as a tool for extending students’ thinking is seen in Lesson 3: Plantation Life. After completing the dramatic exercises in the lesson, the dialogue proceeds as follows:

(The students return to the carpet after completing the last drama exercise in the lesson.)

**Mr. H.:** Okay…we’re gonna talk about that last exercise. First of all…raise you hand if you stayed. There were some people who left and some people who stayed. Raise your hand if you stayed. Some people decided to stay. Why did you stay? (I point to L.J.)

**L.J.:** I didn’t want them to catch me.

**Mr. H.:** Okay…L.J. said she stayed because she didn’t want them to catch her. A lot of slaves decided to stay also because they didn’t want the slave masters to catch them. They were afraid they might get beaten or they might get caught. Why did you stay? (I point to C.Y.)
C.Y.: I stayed because I didn’t want to get whipped or shot.

Mr. H.: Okay…she said she stayed because she didn’t want to get whipped or shot. Is there anyone else who decided to stay? Now…the people who decided to escape. Why did you escape? (The majority of the students raise their hands. I point to J.J.)

J.J.: I tried to escape because I didn’t want to get bossed around.

Mr. H.: Why did you try to escape? (I point to A.L.)

A.L.: I tried to escape because I wanted to find my friends and family.

Mr. H.: Okay…she said she tried to escape because she tried to find her friends and family. Why did you try to escape? (I point to another student)

K.C.: So I could see my family (Lesson 3, Video Transcript).

We see in this example how the reflective dialogue begins with me reflecting on the students’ thinking and decisions during the previous drama activity. During the drama activity, all the students pretended to be slaves and had the option of escaping or remaining on the slave plantation. Rather than passively accept the students’ decisions and actions during the drama activity, I chose to utilize this action as the initial subject of discussion during the reflective dialogue. I begin by questioning the decision of those students who decided to stay on the slave plantation. My intent was to first identify and expose the rationale undergirding the decision to remain on the plantation. Then, I attempted to infuse the notion of resistance to oppression into the discussion by posing
questions to those in the group who decided to leave the plantation. Rather than merely ‘tell’ my students that resistance to oppression is a necessary component in creating a more racially just society, I chose to invoke this line of thinking through questioning. Thus, I asked my students to explain their various rationales behind resisting the slave master and the institution of slavery in this drama activity. As this reflective dialogue continues, we now begin to see how I worked to push their thinking beyond the current levels of consciousness and toward critical racial consciousness:

Mr. H.: Now…here’s the next question. How did you feel being a slave? What did it feel like? Tell us how it felt and tell us why? If you think it felt great tell us why? If you think it felt good tell us why? Tell us why?

S.G.: It felt hard.

Mr. H.: It felt hard. Okay…what felt hard about it?

S.G.: (She pauses with a blank stare) We’ll come back to you. (I point to another student)

Mr. H.: Who else can tell us…what did it feel like being a slave? (I point to D.J.)

D.J.: I felt like a chump!

Mr. H.: I cant hear you.

D.J.: A CHUMP!!!
Mr. H.: Okay…he said he felt like a chump. That means that somebody is taking advantage of you. Why did you feel like that?  

D.J.: I didn’t like being bossed around.

Mr. H.: He didn’t like being bossed around. How did you feel? (I point to G.P.)

G.P.: It felt bad.

Mr. H.: Okay…it felt bad. What was bad about it?  

G.P.: It felt bad because they had to clean. (Lesson 3, Video Transcript)

In posing the why question to my students, I was attempting to push students beyond either or ‘good/bad’ dichotomizations of human experience. By asking my students to explain why they felt a particular way about the slave or marginalized experience, I attempted to engage my students in moving beyond the obvious and to think more deeply about the social conditions of the enslaved Africans during this period in history. While the why question presented a challenge for S.G., the other students in the dialogue supplied answers that were rich, meaningful, and moved them beyond obvious or concrete understandings of the African American experience during slavery to more complex ways of thinking about this experience in both individual and collective terms. This process replicates itself as the dialogue centers on the dominant perspective in this lesson:

Mr. H.: Now…how did it feel being the slave master? (I point to D.A.)

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7 This is the second instance of me attempting to extend their thinking in this dialogue.
8 This is the third instance of me attempting to extend their thinking in this dialogue.
D.A.: It felt good!

Mr. H.: Why did it feel good?\(^9\)

D.A.: It felt good taking them down!

Mr. H.: Okay…it felt good taking them down. How did you feel? (I point to another student)

A.L.: Happy…because…I like whipping them.

Mr. H.: Okay…you liked being in control. Now…think about this for a second. If you where in charge of someone and you beat them and whipped them, how would that make you feel?\(^10\)

L.J.: Good because…I’m not a slave.

Mr. H.: Okay…you said good because your not a slave. How would that make you feel? (I point to another student)

A.W.: It would feel GREAT!

Mr. H.: So…even though it made the slaves feel horrible…you still think it would feel great?\(^11\) How would it make you feel?

N.O.: GOOD!

Mr. H.: Do you think it was a good idea for them to continue to do that?\(^12\)

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\(^9\) Fourth instance of extending their thinking
\(^10\) Begins problematizing their thinking by making the hypothetical personal
\(^11\) Second attempt to problematize their thinking.
M.W.: I think I wouldn’t feel good.

Mr. H.: You wouldn’t feel good about that?

(M.W. shakes her head yes in agreement with me)

Mr. H.: How would you feel? (I point to J.C.)

J.C.: I would feel angry.

Mr. H.: You would feel angry. How would you feel? (I point to S.G.)

S.G.: Sad

Mr. H.: Why would you feel sad?¹³

S.G. Because they kept bossing around people.

(I begin giving instructions for the subsequent language arts writing assignment)

In this remaining portion of this reflective dialogue, we begin to discuss the dominant or slave master perspective in this lesson. To my surprise, several students reported feeling ‘good’ about being the slave master. For some students this good feeling was justified as being able to have control/power over the other group. Still, for other students, this good feeling was explained as merely not occupying a marginalized position. It became apparent to me by their responses that many of my students view power as an either/or binary or what Kivel (1996) calls a zero-sum relationship. That is, they conceive of power relationships solely in terms of dominator/marginalized or

¹² Third attempt to problematize their thinking.
¹³ Fifth attempt to extend their thinking.
oppressor/oppressed relationships. Therefore, in this instance, I worked to problematize it with regard to issues of racial justice and power. Eventually, through this problematization process, several students began to recognize the injustice connected with the slave master perspectives; at which point they began to express and attach more negative sediments and feelings of injustice to being a slave master.

Summary

In short, data analyses reveal dialogue as playing significant yet varied roles (See Figure 4.1) throughout the 9-lesson unit to lead to the development of critical racial consciousness (Friere, 1972; Brush, 2001) in and among the students in my classroom. First, during the pre-text portion of each lesson, dialogic exchanges between my students and I was used to contextualize racial concepts, terms, and information necessary to participate in and understand subsequent lessons. After completing the pre-text dialogue with my students, we began reading/discussing the texts that corresponded with the lesson’s focus. It was here that dialogue adopted an additionally integral role as it was used to illuminate racial knowledge and perspectives not explicitly written in the text. Next, during the dramatic exercises in each lesson, dialogue was used as an important tool in critical knowledge construction. Finally, reflective dialogue was used before and after the drama activities to clarify and problematize students’ thinking related to race, racism and the historical information and perspectives presented in the unit. I now proceed with a discussion of the tensions that developed as I implemented the unit.
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Table 4.1: The Roles and Uses of Dialogue
Narrative II: ‘I don’t want to paint the picture as if it is some grand narrative…’

Early in the lesson development phase of this work, I found myself encountering tensions around what to include and what not to include in this 9-lesson unit on African American history. Much of these initial tensions arouse out of both a personal and political desire/effort not to treat this content in a superficial manner as a means of increasing critical racial consciousness in my classroom. Seeing race, as represented and discussed within the institutionalized social studies curriculum as a location of domination, marginalization, critique, and resistance, I began with intentions of ‘transforming’ (Banks, 1994) the curriculum. Practically speaking, this required creating a new curriculum altogether, as the current social studies curriculum addressed African American history in a superficial and non-critical manner. However, while this task appeared quite simple to achieve in theory, it proved itself to be somewhat challenging in practice when I quickly happened upon the question of what would or would not be the focus of each lesson within this unit. While gathering and sorting potential resources to be used in this unit I wrote the following journal entry:

*Yesterday, Sunday 1/14/07, I spent a little over 2 hours creating a visual overview of the 9 lessons in the unit and the drama activities I wanted to use with each lesson. This really helped me get organized. I left the section containing the text titles blank for two reasons. First, it allowed me to concentrate more on the drama and the overall organization of the unit sequence as a whole. Second, I had not picked up the books from the library yet, though I requested a teacher collection at the Will Rd and Kenya branches. I did a search of materials at the*
P-Towne library as well. I will pick up those books this week from P-Towne. The Will Road search was okay at best. I looked through the materials they found and decided to keep 10 out of about 30 books. I then looked on the shelf and found some other seemingly useful historical non-fiction pieces. The question I kept thinking about as I looked through the books was, “What to include and what to omit?”. It quickly occurred to me that this will be an on-going tension in this work—as the nature of A.A. history from slavery to Post-Civil Rights is so rich and complex.—How do we/I teach about history in ways that are non-essentialist yet comprehensive? (January 15, 2007 Journal Entry)

Having only nine lessons to present a somewhat comprehensive yet critical version of African American history, I was forced to make some necessary submissions and exclusions around these issues of curriculum content. Although limited space within a 9-lesson unit provided a temporary resolution to the tensions over what to include in the unit broadly, I soon re-encountered this tension as I began to plan each individual lesson in the unit. I quickly realized that while I wanted to engaged in particular content and issues in great depth, space within a mere 30 to 45 minute lesson format did not always lend itself easily to doing so. Thus, as with planning the broader scope and sequence of the unit, I had to makes some necessary negotiations around what would or would not be included in a particular lesson aimed a addressing a particular theme or moment within African American history. In my journal I wrote:

There are what seem like many different (quality) pieces of children’s literature to pull from. However, I could only use 1 and ½ books at most per-lesson. How
could I ensure that I covered the information relevant in each lesson by using only one book or so per lesson? After much hesitation and thought, I decided on an alternative list of resources I would use for the first 5 lessons. Lesson 5, Reconstruction, presented itself as a challenge for me. I thought: What major idea could I attempt to reach about reconstruction? This seems like such a complex concept and moment in history to discuss with 1st graders. After a bit of thought, I finally decided on using the KKK as the center of this lesson.—Not to mention—I found a good piece of literature to coincide with this lesson. The next major topic I struggled with was the Civil Rights movement. I felt like this can almost be an entire unit in of itself. There are so many significant events that have to be collapsed within 1 lesson or so. Would this ultimately be doing what I am trying so hard to resist? That is, presenting an essentialist version of the African American cultural and historical experience. How do I adequately discuss events such as: the sit-ins, boycotts, school desegregation, march on Washington, etc all within 2 lessons or so? How will I do so in a way that is adequate and efficient? Even more so, would this ten lesson unit be essentializing African American history? (Journal Entry, January 15, 2007)

This tension of what to include/exclude in the unit surfaced again as I began to plan each individual lesson. However, this time, this tension shifted to how deep I should go in each lesson as I worked to maintain a non-superficial and critical approach to African American history. In my journal I wrote:
Today I planned the third lesson. The topic was plantation life. I encountered challenges around how much depth to cover in this lesson. I almost felt like I could have taught an entire unit on plantation life. I felt like there were so many issues that needed to be discussed in such a short lesson. I thought about changing the unit to include 2 days on plantation life, but I thought something else in the unit would be sacrificed. So, I decided to stick with the original plan. I thought that if I stayed too long here I would not be able to cover everything else in the 9 lesson unit (Journal Entry: January 30, 2007).

This tension related to how deep to go within a particular lesson continued as I resisted constructing a homogenous conception of African American history. At times this tension was mediated by particular texts that integrated multiple and ‘troubled’ conceptions of African American history. Still, at other times, I allowed my schooling experience as an African American student to inform what I chose to discuss within particular lessons. In my journal I wrote:

I was pleased that the book mentioned that some Africans unfortunately sold slaves. I think this is a frequently overlooked fact. I think my own experiences in school help me understand what is usually missing in the discussion of slavery. I think my challenge is how to continue to look for the un-essentialized story of the African American experience. I don’t want to paint the picture as if it is some grand narrative of “us” against “them”. I want to strive to bring in (as best as I can) some of the complexities of slavery. I want them to understand that it wasn’t
just a “them” vs “us” or “White” vs “Black” discussion. I definitely want to bring in the economic factor as well (Journal Entry, January 30, 2007).

These tensions seemed to increase as I considered which individual perspectives to include/exclude in the unit as well as which perspectives to foreground/background. I automatically assumed that my students would encounter the stories of the traditional African American s/heroes in their K-12 schooling experiences, therefore I was reluctant about spending a great deal of teaching time exploring these traditional figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, etc.. While I agree that they are important contributors to and within African American history, I wanted to spend more time exploring less ‘traditional’ figures (i.e., Nat Turner, John Brown, etc.). However, I found myself encountering another challenge as constraints within the 30-45 minute lesson format did not provide enough ‘space’ to discuss these people in great detail. In my journal I wrote:

*While I was, at least able to introduce Nat Turner and John Brown into the discussion, I must admit that I was not able to discuss these individuals in any great detail or depth. Since my focus within this lesson was on Harriet Tubman, I could do nothing more than mention these other figures. In what ways does a focus on a particular/single identity limit the discussion? I guess there is something that is lost in every choice that is made. I really enjoyed using the text. I think it pointed out critical issues related to Harriet Tubman’s life. I really liked when the author discussed the slave whippings Harriet Tubman endured, and the tensions between her and her husband and the other slaves. I think these are*
important aspects of Harriet Tubman’s life and legacy that are frequently
overlooked intentionally or unintentionally. I must say, again though, that I had
mixed feelings about the overall content within the lesson. On the one hand, I
was happy that certain critical aspects of the Abolitionists Movement were at
least mentioned. However, on the other hand, I felt like I did not treat this issue
with an adequate level of sophistication. Is this yet another example of
superficiality? (Journal Entry, March 1, 2007).

Although I made necessary choices and negotiations to implement the unit, many
of these aforementioned tensions remained unresolved. It was not until later in the unit
that I became more settled with leaving these tensions unresolved. Rather than continue
to work to resolve these tensions, I more or less accepted the fact that it is nearly
impossible to integrate every perspective I deem important in each lesson within the unit.
Just prior to implementing Lesson number 8: Jim Crow I reflected in my journal:

As I preview the next lesson, I noticed that I have a large number of pages to read
(6-23). I will stick closely to the script, because all of my drama structures
depend on it. Looking at it introspectively, I think I may have attempted to
discuss too much in such a small space. However, I had only 9 lessons to work
with. So, I had to sort of squeeze and tuck and even cut in various places.
Because I choose a sort of chronological sequence to the unit and I wanted to
save the last lesson for racism in contemporary contexts, I had to force a
discussion about several significant events into 1 lesson. I choose to focus on the
Sit-Ins—as I was searching for atypical stories that are told about African
American history at the early childhood level. I am probably most excited about this lesson because it will, hopefully, open up a space for me to illuminate an aspect of the Jim Crow era that is often left out of the curriculum until later parts of the elementary school experience. Sure we learn about King and Rosa Parks, but do we learn about Greensboro? Originally I wanted to include a discussion on the 4 little girls in the infamous church bombing, but space would not allow. I also originally thought about teaching the unit for a total of 15 days. However, I settled on 0 days as I thought it would be more feasible both in terms of my research project and in terms of the district mandated social studies curriculum. (Journal Entry, March 7, 2007).

Nieto (2000) argues that schools maintain and exacerbate racism through curriculum by way of excluding or minimizing the contributions of ethnically and racially diverse groups in society. Teachers working toward raising the consciousness of racism in and among their students are likely to encounter challenges, as the institutionalized curriculum provides little or no space for teachers to engage in pro-longed critical discussions about race and racism in society. Accordingly, as is witnessed here in the data, I encountered structural challenges to implementing a critical approach to African American history. At the most basic level, I encountered tensions over fitting a non-superficial version of African American history into 9 lessons. Part of this tension arose out an institutional constraint related to where within the curriculum such content is deemed most ‘appropriate’. Further, I could only implement this content during the district allotted formal social studies periods, because most of the other subject areas were rigidly defined and controlled by the district’s administration.
Additionally, on a more personal and political level, these tensions arouse out of a commitment to working toward increasing the levels of critical racial consciousness in and among my students. Rather than simply make additions to the pre-existing social studies curriculum, I labored to work with my students to engage in a transformative approach to multicultural. I perceived that simply making subtle additions would do no more than reify the current power structures within schools (Banks, 1994). Henceforth, this personal and political commitment frequently evoked tensions as I often felt limited in the degree to which I could engage in particular curriculum content in great depth and extensiveness.

Narrative III: ‘I was surprised by what they already knew’

My pre-conceived notions over the level of racial knowledge my students already possessed, in tandem with what was or was not ‘developmentally appropriate’ for a discussion of race and racism with children in this age group, ultimately aroused another layer of tensions within this work. As early as the curriculum development phase of this work, I struggled over what materials and resources were most appropriate for use with these children. Because I desired to engage in a critical discussion of African American history, I sought out resources and texts that included the less than familiar perspectives on African American history. Unfortunately, however, many of these resources that included critical perspectives on African American history were not necessarily feasible for use with 1st grade; in that, most of the textual material was too dense and written for children in the later portion of elementary. Yet and still, from my perspective, the illustrations and photographs in many of these texts wonderfully captured the horrific
nature of many of the events in African American history. Even more so, much of the
texts and resources that were deemed grade level appropriate held somewhat watered
down or romantic notions of these events. I felt like using these grade level texts alone
would minimize the horrific nature of many of the vicious acts of marginalization
committed toward African Americans in history. Early in my journal I wrote:

I finished developing the first lesson. The internet was useful in finding images to
put on my presentation board. I think these images are extremely important,
because so many of my students have little or no background knowledge about
slavery. As I sorted through many different images on google.com, I encountered
a tension around how graphic the images should be to capture the severity of the
suffering endured. If I use only pictures that include no weapons, shackles,
violece, am I telling only part of the story? I came across what I consider to be
an excellent photo but, unfortunately, the woman in the image was naked. It was
a photo of several African people being escorted against their will by several
slave masters with the help of makeshift weapons. Obviously, due to the nudity, I
couldn’t include that picture—but I thought how perfect that picture was/is in
capturing the gist of the lesson. I eventually settled on a picture that was more
adequate than perfect (Journal Entry, January 28, 2007).

Ultimately, I reconciled this tension within myself by including many of the
graphic images I felt were necessary yet still tasteful. Because I felt so strongly about
engaging in a critical and frank discussion of African American history with my students,
I felt compelled to incorporate these images as texts into the discussion. At times, I used
the grade level texts as a means of simply introducing the information and then I used the images from the more difficult texts to engage my students in a richer, deeper and more critical discussion. It was during these textual discussions that I encountered the second tension with regard to my students’ thinking. That is, I assumed prior to developing the unit that my students had little or no racial background knowledge related to African American history. Having participated in only 1 year or less of formal schooling and being anywhere from 5 to 7 years of age, I assumed that they knew little other than the traditional and superficial notions of African American history such as the Martin Luther King Jr. “I Have A Dream” speech and the Rosa Parks infamous “Bus Ride”. Thus, I constructed many of the lessons in the unit in such a way to involve a significant number of textual readings. Initially, I assumed that I could best resolve this perceived lack of racial background information through extensive reading. To my early surprise, this assumption was incorrect. In both a pre and post lesson reflection on Lesson 2: Journey to America: I wrote:

Pre-Lesson: I am using three books in this lesson to better describe the richness and complexity of the slave ship experience. I am wondering how this choice will play out. Will it help or hurt the lesson? Is it possibly too much reading?

Post-Lesson: This lesson went well as far as I could tell. I thought the textual reading portion was a bit long as I suspected. The children asked questions about why the Africans in the story were on trial. I thought that was an excellent question, because I believe it is important to note that some African people even sold other Africans. As before, the students seemed highly engaged with the
pictures in the “Middle Passage”. I was surprised that T.H. had so much background knowledge related to “Amistad Rising”. She said she saw the movie and made a few comments while reading (Journal Entry, February 16, 2007).

While I was surprised by the amount and depth of racial knowledge T.H. already possessed related to the Amistad, I did not take this instance as any indication of the depth of prior (racial) knowledge the other students may have related to African American history. As such, I didn’t bother to revise my initial lesson plans or perform any sort of pre-assessment prior to each lesson to determine their current levels of racial knowledge. Instead, I continued to operate under the assumption that they knew very little about critical events in African American history and thereby needed to participate in extensive textual readings related to this topic. This misperception ultimately developed into a second tension related to student’s racial knowledge and consciousness, as I struggled between using the pre-mediated texts or my students’ knowledge base as the chief source of teaching and learning. In a journal reflection on Lesson 4 I wrote:

I got so involved in the discussion that I didn’t want to move on with the texts. However, the other part of me felt that it was necessary to read the text—as it would yield more info than our discussion. After taking the 6th comment/question or so, I began with the book. As I read the book, I couldn’t help but to have mixed feelings about ending the discussion. As I read the story fewer and fewer questions arose from the students. During the pre-text discussion, I couldn’t help but to think “wow” these children have a lot of knowledge about the Underground Railroad already. When I asked them what they thought would
happen to escaped slaves if caught, I was surprised by the richness of their responses. M.W. predicted that their hands might get cut off. N.O. speculated that slave masters would use knives to cut off their heads. From here I added to the discussion about how escaped slaves were used as examples. This conversation/dialogue seemed to flow so naturally between the students and me. Why did this exchange occur so naturally? Why did these students have so much prior knowledge? The more answers I gave, the more questions/comments they asked/supplied. I wished I could have eliminated reading the text altogether. What was lost by ending the discussion and reading the text? What was sacrificed, what was gained? After a bit of reluctance, I began the story. It seemed like the more I read, the quieter the students got. Was this a sign of processing or silencing? Or, was it something else even? As I read the text, I realized that the dialogue shifted from a dialogue to more of a monologue. I felt relieved when the story was over and the drama began. This allowed me to readjust the power dynamics to make them more egalitarian. A few times I even had to redirect a few students to refocus on the book I was reading. This made me a bit frustrated. I even thought about stopping the reading at one point and going right into the drama. I liked how the drama and the discussion thereof allowed me to actively co-construct knowledge along side my students while the reading. While reading I felt like I was the only one with the hammer—the only one using the tools. At one point during the reading, a few students seemed to become more interested. I immediately fed off of their energy. I got excited when G.P. asked how the slaves found their way to the Underground Railroad. Again,
this question enriched the discussion as it opened up a space for me to talk about
the slave navigation systems (i.e., North Star). A.D. asked if those who harbored
runaway slaves would be punished. I thought this comment illustrated a
tremendous degree of insight on his part. I wondered if he had, perhaps, had
prior knowledge or experience in discussing the Underground Railroad. As I
read page by page, I stopped to discuss any concepts or ideals I thought needed
further elaboration and or emphasis. The children, at times, asked questions but
mostly sat and looked quietly. What did these stares mean? (Journal Entry,
February 26, 2007).

Almost near the end of the lesson I began to realize that a large number of textual
pages were not necessarily needed to engage in a critical discussion of African American
history, because many of my students already possessed rudimentary and even rich racial
knowledge related to this topic. I eventually resolved this tension by learning to mediate
their current knowledge base with the textual material. At times, I allowed the text to take
the lead in facilitating the discussion. Still, at other times, I allowed their racial
knowledge to assume the lead in the discussion. To this end, I even discontinued reading
the text to better facilitate this process at times. After Lesson 7: Reconstruction: I
reflected:

Today I completed lesson 7. I began by reviewing the previous info from the
beginning of the unit. The students were able to recall all of the info we
discussed. I then explained that today we will be discussing Reconstruction and
the fact that many people kept slaves even though the laws were against it. I
explained that many Whites still did not like Blacks and formed a secret group called the Klu Klux Klan. I began by reading the story and explaining some particulars of the KKK in detail. As some point L. J. (White) mentioned that her granddad said that the KKK existed, but they are far from us. I agreed that they still exist, but I also clarified that some KKK may still be near us—that we don’t always know because they tend to met in secrecy. I was happy that L.J. mentioned this point because it allowed me to emphasize that racial injustice is not just a thing of the past. As we continued through the book, I noticed that the children were posing more questions than me. To my surprise, many of the questions were quite critical in nature or “problematic” as Freire calls it. All I did for most of this particular lesson was merely respond to their questions. For example A.D. asked, “Why did they hang the Black people from a tree?” V.V. asked at one instance, “Did they burn the tree?” He mentioned that he had seen something like that and the tree was burned. Here I am thinking that I have to read about 20 or so pages in order for them to develop a clear understanding of the KKK and their history of terror in the U.S., when they already had a significant amount of background knowledge related to this topic. I decided about 20 pages into the text that the children seemed to have a foundational level of knowledge on this topic and were searching for a deeper and more critical discussion of the topic. I guess I assumed that they knew little or nothing about the KKK. I guess I thought that extensive textual info was the way to opening up a space for discussing these issues. I never stopped to think that maybe they already knew a considerable amount of information on this topic. Because of all
of the questions they asked, I maintained a more passive role in terms of the questions I asked. Instead the children more or less facilitated the discussion by the questions they asked. This made me (re)think about my role in this form of pedagogy. What is my role in this form of pedagogy? I stopped reading the text after page 17. This left about 8 pages of text and photos un-discussed. While I originally thought that reading more text on this topic would help the children understand the KKK in greater depth, I realized about ¾ of the way into the text that I might have been mistaken. The children were starting to get restless as I had to keep reminding a few students to sit properly or sit up. Finally I realized around page 17 that I should stop and go into the drama. I think, now in hindsight, I could have just read up to the Night Rides part (about 7 pages of text and photos) and then transitioned into the drama (Journal Entry, March 8, 2007).

Ramsey (2004) argues that children as young as 3 years of age begin to develop racial knowledge about and toward particular groups in society. Moreover, Ausdale and Feagin (2001) argue that children have a very profound and accurate understanding of race as they are consciously and unconsciously being socialized by multiple and varied social and cultural institutions in society (i.e., media, school, family, church, child care center, etc.). Interestingly, however, many adults (albeit teachers, parents, caregivers etc.) assume from a deficit oriented perspective that racial and cultural knowledge does not develop until much later in children. In keeping with these two assertions, I began this study with the assumption that my children had little or no prior knowledge related to African American history. To my surprise, many students already possessed a significant level of background racial knowledge on this topic. Ramsey (2004) explains that children
of color, in particular, are more likely than White children to have an understanding of race and racism that parallels adults due to a greater probability of experiencing/witnessing racism first hand or via a close family member. Perhaps, as Ramsey explains, the students in my classroom developed this consciousness of race and racism out of personal or family experiences. Or, as Ausdale and Feagin point out, this racialized knowledge developed through interactions within a particular social institution in society.

Narrative IV: ‘It felt good being the slave master’

Another major tension I experienced within this study pertained to ‘pushing’ my students to think beyond a dichotomized consciousness of racial justice. Following the drama portion in several lessons, I asked my students how they ‘felt’ pretending to be the oppressor (i.e., slave master, South, KKK, etc.) in the drama activities. Admittedly, I was surprised by many of the responses my students gave. I expected them to recognize the injustice associated with the oppressor perspective with little or no help from me. In my journal I reflected:

*Today I attempted to use the drama to engage the children in thinking about agency. I asked them to “act” out whether they would stay or attempt to escape as slaves. All but two children left. Later during the debriefing, L.J. and A.J. had quite eloquent and different rationales for their decisions. I thought about how deep I should go in the discussion. I decided to move on; however, it kind of bothered me when a couple of students said they enjoyed being the slave master.*
Was this because I had only presented two options/identities for them to choose from? (Journal Entry, 2/20/07)

At this point in the unit, I was becoming ‘troubled’ by my students’ characterization of the role of slave master. I assumed that they would automatically identify the injustice associated with being a slave master. Interestingly, they responded that it felt ‘good’ being a slave master because they were no longer experiencing the pain of being a slave. In this sense, the students’ thinking or preference toward being a slave master had more to do with no longer being the victim of racial injustice than actually perpetuating racial injustice toward African Americans. As the unit progressed, I made conscious efforts during the discussions to aid my students in recognizing the injustice associated with the dominant perspective. Unfortunately, my students were slow to recognize this injustice. I began to question if my students’ responses were actually ‘real’ or if they were pretend, because as we had just completed the drama exercise. In a journal reflection on Lesson 5: Slave Resistance and Escape I wrote:

I was surprised, again, that the students admitted enjoying being the slave master. I expected them to criticize the slave master for his injustices. After 3 students stated that they enjoyed being the slave master, I shifted the discussion by asking if anyone felt bad about enacting this role. While two students bravely identified with this position, I thought more students would have assumed this same position. How can I move my students toward identifying injustice in a variety of contexts? Should I simply regard this as simply a function of drama pedagogy? To what extent is their understanding pretend or real? (Journal Entry, 3/1/07)
This pattern of not recognizing the racial injustice associated with the dominate perspective continued in the next lesson. In a journal reflection on Lesson 6: Civil War I wrote:

*During the debriefing, I asked the students to describe how it felt to be the South when they lost and the North when they won. I was both a bit disappointed and surprised by the reasons/rationales many of the students gave for feeling good about the North winning the war. I thought they would have stated that they felt good because slavery was wrong. However, most of them explained that it felt good because they could avenge the violence that was perpetuated against them by the South. After M.A. mentioned that he, in fact, felt good because slavery was over, I took this opportunity to inquire if any one else felt similarly. A couple of other students articulated a position that was similar to M.A., but the majority of the students maintained their previous position. How do I move students beyond win/lose understandings of justice? How do I help my students understand that using violence to combat oppression is problematic? How can I scaffold my students into constructing other more productive ways of thinking about combating injustice?* (Journal Entry, 3/5/07)

Again, the tension and frustration I experienced is witnessed in the subsequent lesson. Yet, this lesson marks the beginning of a shift in their thinking as more and more students begin to recognize the injustice associated with the dominant perspective in history. In a reflection on Lesson 7: Reconstruction I wrote:
During the debriefing, I asked them how it felt being a KKK member. A few students said “good”. Again, their rationale was more or less that they would rather do the whipping than get whipped. To push their thinking further, I asked them if anyone felt bad about treating the Black family like this. Immediately several hands went up. These children explained that they felt bad because they did not like beating these people for no justifiable reason. I must say that I was pleased that this response did eventually surface. However, I wanted to hear it automatically after the first time I posed this question (Journal Entry, 3/8/07).

McLaren (1989) explains that it is often difficult to recognize injustice in its varied manifestations within the curriculum as they are often ‘hidden’ from plain view. Accordingly, the students in my class did not easily recognize the racial injustice embedded in many of the dominant perspectives. Instead, many of them associated positive feelings with the dominant perspective due to the fact that the dominant perspective was seemingly better than the marginalized perspective. Further, it was only through problematizing their responses (via extensive questioning) that several students eventually began to identify the racial injustice inherent in the dominant perspectives.

Narrative V: ‘He’s too young to learn about all that stuff…’

A third tension that developed during this study pertained the ways in which race, racism, and the discussions thereof became problematic for some of the White parents in my classroom. Kalin (2002) points out that engaging in critical, anti-racist education can lead to seemingly negative consequences for teachers, as this form of education requires teachers to be openly oppositional and ideological about their position toward resisting
and eradicating racism within school structures and processes. In doing so, race moves from being less neutral to more political as those parties involved are positioned as working either toward or against racial oppression—both consciously and subconsciously. Consistent with Kalin’s point, tensions developed between some White parents and me as I labored to openly resist racial oppression within the mandated, standardized, and taken for granted 1st grade social studies curriculum. Being open about my commitment toward resisting/combating racism as an African American critical educator seemed to have little or no impact on the White parents of the students in my classroom prior to implementing the unit. However, early into the unit, one of the White parents of a student in my class became ‘concerned’ about what his daughter was learning under the guise of ‘Civil Rights’. After participating in a lesson related to why we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.’s contribution to society, a young student named A.L. zealously went home to share with her dad what she learned about Martin Luther King, Jr and the Klu Klux Klan. When I arrived at school on the subsequent Tuesday, my Principal greeted me at my mailbox with a displeased look and asked me to join her in her office. When she closed her office door after me, I knew that whatever we were going to discuss was serious in nature. After a short debriefing on the matter, the ‘concerned’ parents entered the room and the meeting between the 4 of us began. We dialogued about the issue in question for roughly 45 minutes or so, then we all eventually concluded that there had been no harm committed by the content presented in the lesson. I couldn’t help but to leave that meeting feeling confused. On one hand, I understand that discussions of race can evoke negative feelings. However, I was not sure whether or not

14 There is a photograph accompanying a small biography outside my door that expresses my commitment to racial and cultural equality.
the parents’ concern was truly over what their child was learning or over what this
content forced them (as White Americans) to discuss/confront with their child.

Following the incident I reflected in my journal:

I arrived at school and Ms. Cana (Principal) asked to speak with me. She said
that Mr. L.R., Pat L.R.’s father spoke with her and mentioned that Pat said,
“White people didn’t like Black people back then!” Ms. Cana said that Mr. L.R.
felt that his daughter was too young to be introduced to that material and that he
“just wanted to talk”. Immediately I was both shocked and disturbed. Ms. Cana
said that the meeting would take place at 9:00 am. As I journeyed to my room,
several thoughts entered my mind. I wondered if this was due to: a)
developmental misunderstandings or b) racism by her father—and seeing no
value in the study of African American history. When the meeting started, Mr.
L.R. voiced his apologies for making such an issue of this. As the discussion
ensued each of our concerns were eased. From our conversation I learned that
he felt unsure as to how to have an age appropriate discussion of such topics with
his daughter. He also felt that I should have informed him prior to instructing the
students around these issues. That way, he could have been better suited to
discuss these issues. We both ended the meeting on cordial terms and feeling
relieved. He agreed with my argument about the need for children (His daughter
in particular) to learn about what Whites did to the world. He apologetically
emphasized that it wasn’t just Blacks and that “we” (Whites) did it to the
Japanese as well. So the question for me ended up being: Was all of this over his
anxiety over not having the strategies to deal with racism and White privilege
appropriately with his daughter? Or, was it more of a lack of a desire to confront/acknowledge racism and White privilege in general? I guess I will never truly know—After all, he signed the consent form for his daughter to participate in the study (Journal Entry, 1/26/07).

Such was also the case with another White parent of a student in my classroom during the course of the unit. During a Parent Teacher meeting, this parent expressed her concern over the content in the unit as well. Like A.L.’s father, she couched her discussion in the notion of age appropriateness. Following our discussion I reflected in my journal:

C.M.’s mom mentioned to me during Parent Teacher Conferences that she wanted C.M. to learn about M.L.K. and African American history, but she didn’t want him to learn about discrimination. Her reason being was that she wanted to preserve his innocence. She stated that he was “too young” to learn about all that “stuff”. I just listened to her comments and the conversation quickly turned to C.M.’s academic progress. I wondered why she thought C.M. was “too young”. I also wondered how a discussion of MLK could occur without discussing discrimination simultaneously (Journal Entry, 2/19/07).

Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) argue that discussions of race and racism are often met with resistance by Whites, because it frequently evokes feelings of guilt and shame. When Whites lack adequate tools to properly process such feelings, it is common for them to respond to these feelings through denial, blame, rationalization, and or avoidance. Consistent with Derman-Sparks and Phillips assertion, we see how merely mentioning groups such as the Klu Klux Klan and discrimination elicited feelings of
concern among A.L.’s. and C.M.’s. parents. What is most important in these events is that there was more articulated concern over the ‘appropriateness’ of this content than the ‘accuracy’ of the discussions taking place. What becomes apparent in both of these interactions was that they (White parents) felt quite uncomfortable discussing these issues with their children, as it forced them to recognize the role of racial oppression and privilege in both past and present contexts. Thus, as Bonilla-Silva (2003) explains, they advocated for a color-blind or politically neutral discussion of race within the curriculum to avoid having to ‘unpack’ the baggage (McIntosh, 1988) associated with being benefactors of White Privilege. Further, as McIntosh (1988) argues, this baggage is difficult for most Whites because they have been taught (both consciously and unconsciously) most of their lives that race is a politically neutral construct and that racism is a something that happened in the past. Having discussed the tensions I experienced with these parents in my classroom, I now proceed with a discussion of the final level of tensions that emerged throughout this study.

   Narrative VI: ‘I see the importance, but what would drive other teachers?’

   A final tension that developed during this study related my identity as an African American educator working with predominately African American children. As an African American educator, I couldn’t help but to feel some degree of responsibility to infuse the discussions with perspectives and aspects of African American history that my students, perhaps, may not encounter if they had a non-African American teacher. In this sense, I wanted my identity and cultural knowledge base as an African American person to be a direct benefit to my students. Thus, I not only sought to incite a critical discussion
of African American history within and among my students, I, nonetheless, worked hard to facilitate a non-essentialized discussion as well as a means of contributing to the development of critical racial consciousness. I felt that because I am an African American I have a particular kind of responsibility and, perhaps, obligation to my collective race to delve into these discussions in ways that are richer and more critical than teachers who are not African American. Thus, as an African American teaching primarily African American students, I saw it a grave disservice to teach the ‘mandated’ district curriculum as prescribed; as it encouraged what Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey (1998) calls a ‘Heroes and Holiday’s’ approach to the teaching and learning about African American history. Prior to implementing the unit, I was disturbed by both the quality and quantity of the district’s social studies curriculum devoted to African American history. After reviewing my district’s mandated social studies curriculum standards related to African American history I reflected:

As I set here and look at the curriculum time line—a document that literally outlines each lesson teachers in our district should teach and the day it should happen—I am surprised by such little that is included around African American history and the superficial way in which it is included. It would seem that in a school district where more than 80% of its students are African American that ‘we’ would be more visible in the curriculum—especially during Black History month. What constitutes the curriculum, instead, is a list of state standards (vague) such as: chronology, daily life, heritage, location, places and regions, and human and environmental interaction. Is it possible to teach the standards in a way that is also critical? [Standard Knowledge vs. Critical Knowledge] This
also makes me think about what would motivate teachers to engage in this form of curriculum transformation I am undertaking. I see the importance as an African American, but what would drive other teachers (White)? My lived experiences with individual and institutional racism has made me sensitive and aware of the ways in which racism operates subtly in schools (Journal Entry, 1/21/07).

While at times fulfilling this personal and political responsibility (to my race) involved integrating information about less than traditional African American figures such as ‘Nat Turner’ into the discussions, it also frequently involved integrating information about less than traditionally discussed White figures. In my journal I wrote:

*Pre-lesson reflection—I am excited about teaching this lesson because it will allow me to, hopefully, expand the discussion of African American history to make it more inclusive of traditionally less recognized figures such as John Brown and Nat Turner. I will begin by focusing on Harriet Tubman, but I hope to be able to introduce John Brown and Nat Turner into the discussion. I think John Brown is important because it will help my children understand that “all” Whites did not endorse slavery during this time. At the same time, I purposely did not include a discussion on Abraham-Lincoln, because it is commonly told that he his responsible for freeing the slaves. Instead of perpetuating this fallacy, I choose to focus on other key figures within the Abolitionists movement. I figured that my students will eventually encounter that misnomer at some point within their educational experience. Also, due to a limited amount of time spent teaching this*
moment in history, I had to make some necessary decisions around who would or would not be the focus of this lesson (Journal Entry, 3/1/07)

At this point we witness the development of an internal tension. Feeling responsible for teaching my students about African American history in ways that, perhaps, other White teachers would not, I choose to engage my students in a discussion of the Abolitionists Movement that does not paint the picture of African Americans as eternally indebted to Abraham Lincoln for ‘freeing’ all of the slaves. After the lesson I wrote:

Post-lesson Reflections—I began this lesson with an introductory dialogue. It occurred to me how important dialogue is in setting the state for subsequent learning. I asked questions to prompt prior knowledge mostly and then I introduced the term abolitionist and explained that we would be talking about several of them in this lesson. I emphasized that some abolitionists were White and used John Brown as an example. At the time, I felt good about being able to point to a non-Black abolitionist, but I now wonder why he is the only one I know of that is non-Black? As I read the story, I stopped almost after every other page or so and discussed what was read. At times I clarified and emphasized. At other times, I used questions to scaffold their thinking. What was most interesting to me was that I used my cultural knowledge of African American history in the discussion. In many cases this expanded the dialogue beyond what was written on the page and or what the students asked. While I was, at least able to introduce Nat Turner and John Brown into the discussion, I must admit that I was
not able to discuss these individuals in any great detail or depth. Since my focus within this lesson was on Harriet Tubman, I could nothing more than mention these other figures. In what ways does a focus on a particular/single identity limit the discussion? I guess there is something that is lost in every choice that is made (Journal Entry, 3/1/07).

McCarthy (1993) argues that it’s common, even within critical forms of multicultural education, for teachers to construct essentialized notions of race and culture. Thus, teachers must labor to ‘trouble’ many of these grand narratives related to particular groups of people. To this end, Kumashiro (2001) cautions that this process of ‘troubling’ grand narratives or homogeneous notions of race/culture often becomes an arduous task, as it is more feasible and convenient to think of groups within essentialized terms. Consistent with Kumashiro’s caution, I experienced difficulty while working toward implementing a non-homogenous version of African American history. However, unlike Kumashiro’s explanation, my challenges were internal as they were precipitated by both a personal and political responsibility I felt for infusing perspectives and information about African American history that may not necessarily be integrated by White educators.

Summary

In short, data analyses reveal that dialogue was used in varied ways to contribute to the development of critical racial consciousness (Friere, 1972; Brush, 2001) (See Figure 4.1). First, during the pre-text portion of each lesson, dialogic exchanges between my students and I was used to contextualize or situate concepts and information to be
explored in the subsequent lessons. After the first lesson and continuing throughout the rest of the unit, this pre-text dialogue was additionally used to review previously learned concepts and information. In this sense, then, the pre-text dialogue can be thought of as situating the upcoming lesson in a broader socio-historical context. Thus, the pre-text dialogue became layered or richer as the students acquired more relevant information and concepts to draw upon during these exchanges.

After completing the pre-text dialogue with my students, we began reading/discussing the texts that corresponded with the lesson’s focus. It was here that dialogue adopted an integral role as a form of textual positionality. That is, my students and I entered into a dialogic relationship with the texts. By maintaining this dialogic relationship with the texts, we were able to engage in a deeper interaction with the concepts and information presented in the text. Essentially, this dialogic relationship with the texts provided the opportunity and liberty to explore difficult, unfamiliar, and important textual information in greater detail. Further, this textual relationship ultimately led to an illumination of racial knowledge and perspectives not explicitly written in the text.

During the dramatic exercises in each lesson, dialogue was used as an important tool in critical knowledge construction. In these dramatic episodes, dialogue (between my students and I and among themselves) was used to: a) frame and facilitate problem-posing inquiry; b) communicate assumed (pretended) perspectives; and c) communicate potential solutions to historical problems. Essentially, I used dialogue to frame and facilitate hypothetical problem-posed scenarios for student inquiry. It was then, through
the use of dialogue, that my students constructed knowledge related to the individuals, perspectives, and problems associated with these scenarios. Next, dialogue provided the means by which they communicated the knowledge they constructed related to these hypothetical historical scenarios. In this sense, my students’ open-ended dramatic responses to the hypothetical problem-posed inquiry scenarios can be thought of as a form of dialogue; in that, I communicated to them (via a problem-posed scenario) and then they responded to this scenario through the use of drama. Finally, dialogue was used before and after the drama activities to clarify and extend students’ thinking related to historical issues, concepts, and perspectives. Frequently, before engaging in the drama exercises and after reading the texts, we engaged in dialogue to clarify any seemingly difficult or unclear information presented in the textual discussions. Moreover, we frequently engaged in dialogue after the drama exercises. While these post-drama dialogues typically began as a means of clarifying understanding, I often seized these moments as opportunities to push or extend students’ thinking beyond the current levels; as it relates to issues of power, oppression, and racial justice.

Although my students and I worked to develop critical racial consciousness, I, nonetheless, experienced 5 different types of tensions as I engaged in critical, anti-racist pedagogy throughout this unit on African American history (See Figure 4.1). First, at curriculum development level, I experienced tensions related to what to include and what to omit within the unit. I struggled with whether or not to develop an essential or a complex version of African American history, as nine lessons seemed to be a quite confining amount of space to adequately and richly discuss the complexities of African American history. Second, pertaining to the students in my classroom, I experienced
tensions related to what I thought the students knew and what they actually knew (related to race and African American history) prior to engaging in the unit. Third, I struggled to push my students beyond dichotomized notions of racial justice/injustice. Fourth, I experienced tensions with some White parents in my classroom, as discussions of race and racial oppression evoked negative emotions.
Figure 4.1: Tensions While Developing and Implementing this Unit
Drawing from and extending Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of *ideological becoming*, I argue that each of the 5 tensions developed as I came into contact with and tried to make sense of, accommodate, and assimilate *authoritative* or external ideologies/discourses that were inconsistent with the *internally persuasive ideologies* I held and used to influence my decisions throughout the study. Authoritative ideologies/discourses are defined by Bakhtin as dominant and pre-existing ideologies/discourses whose truth and legitimacy is generally accepted with little or no resistance. Essentially, “…it is the word of the fathers” (p. 342). In contrast, internally persuasive ideologies are ideologies/discourses one thinks for himself or herself and are persuasive to the individual. Bakhtin (1981) argues that as one develops his or her own ideological perspectives within the world through interactions with various social environments (i.e., classrooms, workplace, etc.) the authoritative discourses they encounter are likely to be inconsistent, different, and even in contrast to the internally persuasive ideologies/discourses they currently hold. As such, tensions will emerge as one struggles to make sense of, accommodate, and assimilate these authoritative ideologies/discourses within the context of their internally persuasive ideologies/discourse. Further, this process can then be characterized as “…an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of views, approaches, directions and values” (1981, p. 341).

In keeping with Bakhtin’s perspective, I argue that the tensions I experienced throughout this study developed as I interacted with the curriculum, parents, and students in my classroom and came into contact with varied and even conflicting ideologies/discourses. Essentially, authoritative ideologies/discourses on race, racism,
Whiteness, oppression, marginalization, curriculum, and pedagogy existed prior to the study. Many of these authoritative ideologies/discourse were accepted within and among the parents, students, and formal curriculum with little or no resistance. An example of such is the ideology undergirding the formal social studies curriculum in our district. This ideology/discourse assumes the perspective of a superficial or ‘additive’ (Banks, 1994) approach to multicultural education. In like manner, the dominant ideology/discourse among many White parents of children in early childhood settings is that children are ‘too young’ to learn about the atrocities associated with the Civil Rights Movement (Derman-Sparks & Phillips 1997). As the teacher in the study, I positioned myself as critical, anti-racist education. This position is comprised of and directed by personal and political ideologies/discourses toward eradicating racism in schools and society. Accordingly, from Bakhtin ‘s perspective, these ideologies/discourses comprise my internally persuasive ideologies/discourses. As I implemented the unit and interacted with the parents, students, and formal curriculum, I encountered authoritative ideologies/discourses that were quite different from my internally persuasive ideologies/discourses relating to race, racism, Whiteness, etc. For example, while some parents believed that teaching children about the less than romantic aspects of African American history would have a detrimental impact on their development, I believed that not teaching them about these aspects would have a detrimental impact on their development. Ultimately, these and similar ideological inconsistencies led to tensions, as I struggled to understand, accommodate and assimilate what I believed internally and what exists as the authoritative or external ideology/discourse.
It is likely that other teachers (both pre-service and in-service) will experience similar kinds of tensions as they position themselves in parallel ways that work to identify, resist, and or accommodate the authoritative or dominant ideologies/discourses related to racism and White privilege. Yet and still, because the internally persuasive ideologies/discourses that inform teachers’ thinking and decisions are subject to vary from context to context and among person to person, it is inevitable that the nature of these tensions will differ. For example, while I experienced tensions related to my positionality as an African American teacher engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy in a predominately African American classroom, a White teacher might experience different tensions related to engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy in predominately a African American classroom—as it is plausible that they will not feel the same personal and political responsibility to the African American race for teaching about African American history that I felt as being a member of the African American race. Also, while the tensions I experienced during this unit primarily involved the formal curriculum, parents, and students, perhaps, tensions may also develop in other areas such as the surrounding school community or the school administration. As Bakhtin (1981) points out, the more one interacts in various social environments or ‘contact zones’, the greater the possibility tensions will occur; as every social environment will hold and present different authoritative ideologies/discourses that are either accommodated, accepted, and or rejected by the teacher. Rather than becoming alarmed by the emergence of these tensions, teachers should work to welcome these tensions in their pedagogical praxis. For as Bakhtin argues, environments rich with tensions are a necessary part of expanding one’s existing ideologies/discourses and developing new ones. Further, it is only against
the backdrop or foreground of varied and even conflicting ideologies that one’s own
sense of the world become validated, critiqued, and even expanded.

If we further couple Bakhtin’s notion with Freire’s (1972) notion of critical
pedagogy as a form of dialogic pedagogy in which both the teacher and the students are
transformed through the process, we become aware, even more, of the importance of
incorporating what I call conflicting dialogues into the teaching and learning transactions
as a means of learning more about race, racism, and privilege. I define conflicting
dialogues as dialogues that encourage perspectives, ideologies, and discourses that not
only differ from those present, but dialogues that specifically encourage perspectives or
ideologies that conflict with the perspectives that are presently being identified. In as
much as dialogue, in of itself, increases the opportunity for learning about multiple and
even marginalized perspectives associated with race, racism, and White privilege when
incorporated into the teaching and learning exchange, conflicting dialogue offers an even
greater possibility for learning about issues of oppression in richer and more profound
ways—as we encounter (despite how oppositional) perspectives that are quite different
than our own. Further, it is then through engaging in these deeper, more profound and
transformative learning experiences that both teachers and students become equipped and
encouraged to act in transformative ways in society. Having discussed the findings from
this study, I now proceed with a discussion of the implications of these findings in
chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

RACE, PEDAGOGY, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Reflections on the Field of Early Childhood Education and Race Pedagogy

To recapitulate, two schools of thought exist within the field of early childhood education concerning how and when teachers should teach children about race and racial oppression in society. Essentially, there are those in the first school of thought (i.e., Aboud, 1988; Katz, 1991) who believe that young children are both cognitively and socially unable to understand race and racism in many of the same ways as adults. Ramsey (2004) points out that this school of thought has impacted early childhood educators in two important ways. First, this school of thought has led many early childhood educators toward completely ignoring or avoiding issues of race and racism in the curriculum. In addition, this line of thinking has led other early childhood educators toward teaching about race in ways that are superficial. To a large extent, these early childhood educators assume and argue that discussions of race and racism should be delayed until children are better suited (both cognitively and socially) to understand and respond to these issues. Thus, it is further assumed that early childhood educators have a minimal role and responsibility in engaging students in dialogues related to these issues.

Contrasting the first school of thought, the second school of thought within the field of early childhood education concerning how and when teachers should teach children about race
and racial oppression argues that children do, in fact, understand race in many of the same ways as adults. Scholars in this school of thought (i.e., Ausdale & Feagin, 2002; Banks, 1993; Derman-Sparks & Phillips; ) not only believe that children understand race in many of the same ways as adults, but they further argue that children as young as 3 or 4 years of age have begun to formulate racial attitudes and perspectives toward particular groups in society. For example, Banks (1993) stated that “by age 4 African American, white, and Mexican American children are aware of racial differences and show racial differences favoring whites” (p. 27). Similarly, Hunt (1999) indicates that children at the age of two through five or six not only show racial awareness, but they may even show prejudices toward others based on gender, race, or different ability. To this end, scholars who subscribe to this school of thought further that teachers have an important role and responsibility in teaching children about race and racism in ways that resist and counter racial oppression in schools and society at large.

In the present study, I attempted to respond to concerns drawn from both of these two schools of thought. Assuming that the young children in my classroom have or are developing racialized perspectives on the world (as consistent with thinking undergirding the latter school of thought mentioned above), I developed and implemented a unit on African American history based in critical, anti-racist pedagogy as a means of identifying, resisting, and countering racial oppression in schools and society. Moreover, responding to the developmental concerns and considerations expressed in the former school of thought mentioned above, I utilized drama pedagogy as a chief pedagogical tool within each lesson. As Grady (1997) explains, drama pedagogy has the potential and promise to engage children in discussions of racial issues in ways that are both substantive and developmentally appropriate. Findings from this study yield important insights and learnings related to early childhood theory and practice—particularly as it relates to multicultural education. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I briefly summarize the findings from this study and discuss the implications of these findings for early childhood
multicultural practice and multicultural teacher education. Next, I theorize what I call a contextually emergent and recursive approach to critical, anti-racist pedagogy in early childhood classrooms. Finally, I conclude with several recommendations for future research.

Reflections on this Study

The purpose of this critical action research study is to investigate my teaching experiences while teaching critically about African American history through the use of critical, anti-racist pedagogy. The overarching research question that drives this works is: How does teaching critically about African American history influence the perspectives and understanding in my 1st grade classroom? The additional research questions involved in this work include:

1) What is the nature of critical, anti-racist pedagogy in this early childhood classroom?
2) What instructional challenges and changes occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?
3) What developmental challenges and changes in and my students occur as I teach critically about African American history while using drama as a pedagogical tool?
4) What personal/political challenges occur as I teach critically about African American history?
5) What pragmatic challenges and changes (i.e., classroom, institutional etc.) occur as I teach critically about African American history?

In the first narrative, I articulated the findings related to the first of the more specific research questions in this study (What is the nature of critical, anti-racist pedagogy in this early childhood classroom?). Data analysis reveal that dialogue was used in varied and specific ways to increase the levels of what I call critical racial consciousness related to African American history, race, and racism in this classroom. First, during the pre-text portions of each lesson, dialogue was used primarily to situate or contextualize subsequent concepts, terms, and
information. Pre-text dialogue was also used to review previously learned knowledge. Second, textually mediated dialogue occurred during the textual interactions portion of each lesson and was used to illuminate implicit racial knowledge and information in the texts. Third, during the pre-drama/post-textual portion of each lesson, reflective dialogue was used to clarify and extend thinking. Fourth, during the drama exercises, dialogue was used to frame inquiry, facilitate participation in inquiry, assume multiple perspectives, construct critical knowledge, and develop solutions to hypothetical problems. Finally, dialogue was used during the post-drama portion of each lesson to reflect on dramatic experiences and to clarify, extend, and critique thinking.

In the remaining 5 narratives in chapter 4, I discussed the challenges and tensions I experienced while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy. In the second narrative, pertaining to the curriculum development and implementation phases of this work, I discussed the challenges and tensions I experienced related to the depth of knowledge presented in each lesson and what perspectives to include/exclude in each lesson; as I labored to avoid engaging in a superficial discussion of African American history. Next, in the third narrative, I discussed the tensions I experienced related my preconceived notions over what my students did or did not know prior to the implementation of this unit. Essentially, these preconceived notions became problematic as I began to realize that my students already possessed a rich knowledge of African American history and thereby needed less instructional time devoted to building background around this content. In the fourth narrative, I discussed the challenges and tensions I experienced related to moving students’ thinking beyond dichotomized notions of racial justice. In narrative 5, I discussed the parental opposition I encountered as I implemented the unit. Finally, in narrative 6, I discussed the challenges and tensions I experienced related to the personal and political responsibility I felt as African American educator committed to teaching for social justice with a predominately African American student population. Having reviewed the findings yielded from this study, I
shall now discuss the implications of this work for in-service and pre-service teachers as well as some recommendations for future research.

*Implications for Early Childhood Multicultural Practice*

The results from this study have several implications for early childhood multicultural practice. First, data from this study remind those of us within the field of early childhood education of the need to construct what I call *dialogical safe spaces* for children. That is, spaces within early childhood classrooms where teachers and students can and are encouraged to engage in open, honest, and critical dialogue around issues of race, power, oppression, and the like. While it is common for early childhood educators to assume that children have little or nothing of significance to say/discuss around issues of race, oppression, and marginality, I argue, based on the data derived from this study that children do have a significant amount of knowledge to discuss around these subjects. However, they (children) exhibit minimal participation in discussions related to these issues do to the ways in which most of these discussions are fundamentally structured. In as much as I structured many of the lessons in this unit to center on teacher directed pedagogy (based on preconceived notions about what they did or did not know), it is common for many early childhood teachers to spend more time *speaking* to children than engaging in a mutually beneficial dialogue with children; as it is assumed, in many cases, that children have little to contribute to serious discussions of race, culture, oppression, etc. (Ausdale & Feagin, 2002). To my surprise, however, the data from this study suggest that when we (early childhood educators) create spaces where children can feel comfortable and safe enough to voice their ideals, musings, and tentative thinking related to these issues, they are more likely to participate both constructively and contributively in a rich and mutually beneficial dialogues with both their peers and the teacher in the classroom. Consequently, early childhood educators should
place more emphasis on creating forums within their classrooms in which dialogic exchanges between children and teachers can be supported, nurtured, and honored.

In as much as the data from this study remind early childhood educators of the need to create *dialogic safe spaces* wherein teachers and students feel comfortable to engage in intimate dialogue related to issues of power, race, oppression, and marginalization, the data also imply the need for early childhood teachers to acknowledge, integrate, and respond to what I call the *dialogic curriculum* that develops along the course of implementing a unit on race, class, gender, etc.. That is, the unpremeditated curriculum that is both originated in and directed by dialogue. While it is common for educators at later portions of the elementary school experience to enlist a dialogic curriculum when teaching and learning about content related to race, racism, and the like, it is less common for early childhood teachers to utilize such a curriculum when teaching and learning about issues of difference and marginality. Interestingly, data from this study imply the potential dialogue has to both enrich and expand the pre-mediated curriculum. At times within this study, the dialogues that developed outside of and around the texts became more involved and enriched than the dialogues relating to the texts used to anchor the lessons. Yet and still, due to ways in which the lessons were structured, I elected to continue reading the texts; which ultimately extinguished the additional organic curriculum that was developing. Thus, I suggest that early childhood educators wishing to engage in similar kinds of critical, anti-racist pedagogy do so in ways that are both responsive to and cognizant of the dialogic curriculum that will develop during the process.

Thirdly, the data from this study yield an important implication for practice related to teachers’ assumptions of children’s understanding of the salience of race, culture, and other forms of diversity in society. Like many early childhood educators, I began the study with the assumption that my students had little or no background knowledge related to issues of race and
culture in general and African American history in particular. As such, I structured many of the lessons to involve a great deal of textual reading. To my astonishment, I realized early on that my students already possessed a great deal of background knowledge related to many of the concepts I intended to introduce in the texts. The important lesson that we acquire from this experience is not to abandon the texts in their entirety, as the amount and depth of background knowledge children bring to a particular topic will inevitably vary from class to class and topic to topic. Instead, I suggest that teachers develop and utilize a racial/cultural assessment tool throughout the unit. This racial/cultural assessment tool can be used in three specific ways throughout the study. First, prior to implementing the unit, the racial/cultural assessment tool can be used to determine students’ prior knowledge related to the content under exploration. In much of the same way that teachers conduct pre-lesson and on-going assessments of students’ present knowledge when implementing mathematics, reading, and or science units, I suggest, based on the data from this study, teachers conduct a pre-assessment prior to engaging students in discussions related to race, racism, marginality, etc.. This pre-assessment can then be used as a curriculum ‘roadmap’, if you will, concerning where to go in the subsequent lessons. Perhaps, this assessment might initially involve collecting and documenting students’ responses to questions such as:

1) What do you already know about African or African-American (or any other group for that matter) history?

2) Who are some important people in African or African-American history?

3) How did African and African-American people arrive in America?

Depending on the level of sophistication of students’ background knowledge, the teacher should also be prepared to provide other impromptu questions to scaffold students’ recollection of
racial/cultural content. I recommend that this information be recorded and posted in a conspicuous location in the classroom. Then, prior to implementing each subsequent lesson in the unit, teachers can re-visit the previously learned concepts by reviewing the information noted on this assessment and then pose specific questions related to the lesson at hand. This secondary used of the assessment tool is important, because it is likely that some students will engage in dialogues with parents and others outside of the classroom after each lesson. By posting the assessment in a visible area in the classroom and adding to it prior to each lesson, it becomes a working document that is being used by both the teacher and the students in the classroom as an on-going means of informing and directing teaching and learning related to the content being explored. Finally, by revisiting this racial/cultural assessment on a daily bases through the duration of the unit, students are able to synthesize the information being learned about the particular racial/cultural group under investigation. Ultimately, through using the racial/cultural assessment tool in these three ways, teachers and students will engage in deeper, critical, and non-superficial dialogues related to racial and cultural diversity in society.

A fourth implication for practice that is derived from this study regards the many tensions that developed throughout the study. As mentioned previously, I experienced multiple and varied tensions as the unit/study progressed. Many of these tensions related to the depth and scope of the content to be included and whose perspectives to include/exclude. In like manner, it is quite plausible that teachers will encounter similar kinds of tensions as they strive to teach in ways that are both critical and based in multiple perspectives. Rather than work to eliminate or dissolve such tensions, I recommend that teachers do the contrary. That is, they work to openly embrace the tensions and ambiguities that may arise as a result of engaging in this form of pedagogical practice. To aid teachers in confronting and dealing with these tensions related to curriculum development and implementation, I suggest that teachers proceed through the lessons in more of a spiraled or textured approach versus a traditional linear approach. Teachers can begin by
proceeding in a linear or chronological fashion, while noting any tensions they encounter along they way. Then, wherever feasible, they should try to make sense of these tensions during subsequent and appropriate places within the unit. Perhaps, these unsettled tensions can even be carried on to other units of study. For example, let us suppose a teacher participates with his or her students in a 15 lesson unit on Native American history. Within this unit, tensions arise related to Christopher Columbus’s role as both a perceived martyr and oppressor. Rather than work to resolve these tensions completely, the teacher can work to discuss Christopher Columbus’s role and identity in multiple contexts. In doing so, the students will inevitably come to terms with the notion that he was a martyr to some individuals while simultaneously being an oppressor to others.

A fifth implication for practice that can be drawn from this work relates to interactions with parents. One unintended consequence of engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy in this class was that two parents (White) openly expressed discomfort with the content presented in this unit; so much so, that one of these parents requested a meeting between the school administrator and I to discuss this issue. Fortunately, we were able to clarify any misunderstandings and concerns related why particular perspectives were being discussed in conjunction with the more traditional events in African American history. Thanks to support from my building administrator, my employment status at the school was not jeopardized in any way. Notwithstanding, Kivel (1996) reminds us that it is likely that similar kinds of consequences will emerge for other teachers involved in this form of pedagogy; as discussions are race and racism are likely to open up emotionally and politically charged discussions. Thus, it is imperative for educators committed to critical, anti-racist practice to engage in what I call pre-unit ideological dialogues with both the parents of the students in the classroom and the building administrator to disclose the intent and content that will be discussed in the unit. During these ideological dialogues, it is important for the critical, anti-racist educator to discuss his or her positionality as
a critical, anti-racist educator committed to eradicating the forms of racism that commonly exists within school curriculum. The critical, anti-racist educator should then strive to identify some ways in which racism exists within the current curriculum, as well as some of the ways in which the ‘transformed’ curriculum attempts to combat and even rectify this racism. Although all of the directions the curriculum will take can not be predicted prior to implementing the unit, these pre-unit dialogues will, at least, provide a rough sketch of some of the topics and conflicting perspectives to come. Two results will ultimately happen in this process. First, parents will be afforded the option to discuss these topics and perspectives in more of a proactive (versus reactive) fashion. Second, an on-going dialogue around issues of race and racism will begin to develop between the students, parents, teacher, and the curriculum that reaches far beyond the classroom walls. Essentially, the goal within these pre-unit ideological dialogues is not to eliminate any parental or administrative opposition to teaching and learning about issues of race and racism in one’s classroom; as opposition to this form of pedagogy frequently can not be eliminated through a one-time dialogue between two parties. Instead, the ideological dialogue is meant to provide an opportunity for the critical, anti-racist educator to more or less ‘come clean’ about one’s intent behind the unit. Further, through this process of coming clean about ones intent and ideologies at the onset of the unit, parents and administrators will be less alarmed when particular questions and concerns about race, racism, and history arise.

Implications for Multicultural Teacher Education

Data from this study have two important implications for teacher education. First, data from this study suggest the possibility of teachers using their racial and cultural identities and experiences as multicultural texts through which student learning is informed, directed, and enriched. As mentioned previously, I used my past and present experiences with institutionalized racism in schooling contexts to inform many of my decisions within this study. Ultimately, these
experiences aided me in determining and infusing perspectives into the curriculum that are frequently omitted in more traditional approaches to multicultural education. In keeping with this frame of thought, pre-service and in-service teachers can use their racial/cultural identities and experiences as texts to inform multicultural decisions within diverse and non-diverse classrooms. Unfortunately, multicultural scholars (i.e., Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Dilg, 1999; Freire, 1972) point out that many teachers (both pre-service and in-service) have yet to critically reflect on their racial and cultural identities and experiences in society. Thus, to facilitate teachers in utilizing their racial identities as multicultural texts, multicultural teacher education courses should be structured in ways that encourage on-going critical reflection of self. While much has been written (i.e., Howard, 2003; McLaren, 1989; Nieto, 2000) about the importance of critical reflection in aiding teachers in better understanding privilege and power asymmetries that exist within classrooms, I advocate, based on the data from this study, for teachers education courses to encourage teacher candidates to reflect critically on their identities and experiences as a means of determining which multicultural perspectives and content to be infused in to the curriculum. In other words, instead of merely asking questions related to the ways in which differences in racial identity grant or deny access and privilege in schooling and classroom contexts, teachers should also critically reflect on how their racial/cultural identities and experiences can enrich the multicultural curriculum. Further, some re-occurring questions/themes that will help teachers (pre-service and in-service) in facilitating this process of using their identities as multicultural texts as they matriculate through their teacher education courses are:

1) What personal experiences do I have with racism in society?
2) What personal experiences do I have with racism in schooling contexts?
3) What were my curricular experiences with regard to difference (i.e., race, class, gender, etc)?
4) Which perspectives appeared most often within the curriculum?
5) Which perspectives appeared least often within the curriculum?
6) Which perspectives were completely missing within the curriculum?
7) How was my racial/cultural history represented within the curriculum?
8) How was my racial/cultural history mis-represented within the curriculum?
9) In what ways can my experiences with race or racism, or lack thereof, inform, direct, or enrich what I teach in my classroom?
10) In what ways can my experiences with race or racism, or lack thereof, inform, direct, or enrich how I teach in my classroom?

A second implication for multicultural teacher education that can be drawn from this study relates to aiding teachers in developing critical and anti-essentialist understandings of race and culture. Frequently during this study I used my racial and cultural knowledge base and experiences as an African American person to inform many of my curriculum decisions. Essentially, I used this knowledge base to aid in determining which perspectives to include/exclude in the curriculum as well as which perspectives my students were likely to encounter throughout their schooling experiences. The critical question then becomes: How do teachers who do not have this knowledge base acquire such knowledge for use in his/her classroom? I argue, based on the data from the study, that teacher preparation programs must assume responsibility for helping teachers develop critical understandings of race, culture, and history. Howard (1999) points out the majority of pre-service teachers have acquired superficial and White dominated perspectives on race and culture through their K-12 educational experiences. Thus, unless these pre-service teachers encounter critical, multiple and varied perspectives on race, culture, and history, it is inevitable that they will transmit much of these superficial and non-critical perspectives in their own classrooms. In as much as teacher education has tended to emphasize how multicultural curriculum can/should be delivered to respond to issues of diversity and equity effectively, it should, notwithstanding, place equal emphasis on
what multicultural curriculum can/should be delivered to respond to issues of diversity and equity effectively. Hence, I argue that teacher education programs be structured in ways that require teacher candidates to take one or more courses related specifically to critical or non-traditional notions of history, race, and culture as a means of expanding their current knowledge base related to these topics.

A third implication for multicultural teacher education that can be drawn from this study relates to integrating teacher education programs with courses, particularly those with an emphasis on issues of diversity and equity, with more courses based in and around the use of drama as a form of critical multicultural pedagogy. As suggested by the findings from this study, drama has great potential for responding to issues of diversity and equity within classroom and curriculum contexts in ways that other more traditional forms of pedagogy can or do not. Unfortunately, however, many regular teachers have not received adequate training and preparation in their pre-service teacher programs to feel comfortable or competent enough to utilize this form of pedagogy in their own classrooms. As a result, drama pedagogy tends to be non-existent in most regular classrooms. More than likely, it is reserved for teachers who have acquired special training as a drama instructor or specialist. As we give serious consideration to the data from this study and couple that with the every changing racial and cultural dynamics in classrooms across America, we see the need for multicultural teacher education programs to structure course work requirements to include one or more courses related to uses of drama as a form of critical multicultural pedagogy. Further, in as much as pre-service teachers interested in teaching in regular\textsuperscript{15} early childhood settings are required in most teacher education programs to develop at least a rudimentary understanding of various pedagogical philosophies and methods needed to teach mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts, I argue that multicultural

\textsuperscript{15} The term regular classroom is used here to refer to classrooms that do not have drama as a focus. Moreover, this would include classrooms where the teacher is not trained as a drama teacher or the classroom is not considered a drama class.
teacher education programs should work to aid teacher candidates in developing equal or greater understandings of the philosophies and methods needed to use drama within the regular classroom settings as a means of equipping teachers with additional pedagogical tools necessary to engage in critical discussions of race.

Implications for New Theories of Critical Multicultural Education: Toward a Contextually Emergent and Recursive Approach to Critical, Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Early Childhood Settings

Although various theories of critical, anti-racist pedagogy exist, they all, more or less, center on linear or chronological approaches. For example, Banks (1994) espouses a typology of approaches to multicultural curriculum ranging from additive at the most superficial level to social action constituting the highest level. While teachers may begin at various levels within this typology, it is, nonetheless, assumed that one can not progress to the next level until they have successfully completed the previous level. While I agree with Banks and other approaches to integrating multicultural curriculum, based on the results from this study, I propose that teachers attempt to implement critical, anti-racist pedagogy in ways that are both contextually emergent and recursive as a means of mediating what children already know and what gets investigated in greater depth throughout the unit. To clarify, a contextually emergent and recursive approach to critical, anti-racist pedagogy consists of a cycle of five on-going steps (see Diagram 5.1). First, critical, anti-racist educators should begin by engaging in preliminary dialogues with their students to determine both the quality and quantity of background knowledge their students already posses. The teacher can also use this preliminary dialogue to identify the questions s/he would like to investigate in further detail throughout the unit. Because curricular time constraints are likely to exist, a negotiation should be made between which questions will used to determine the initial direction of the unit.
The second step involves gathering and evaluating potential materials to be used in the unit. Typically, this would involve selecting children’s literature materials from local libraries and or bookstores. It is important to note here, as suggested from the data in this study, that teachers must carefully examine, critique, and evaluate the usefulness of each text. As was the case in this study, while some texts may have language and content that is seemingly more suitable for use with young children, they may also include ‘romanticized’ notions of race and culture. Therefore, I recommend that teachers also consider above grade level texts in their search. Because it is likely that much of this content in these above grade level texts will be too dense for use with younger children, teachers should consider reading only small portions of the larger texts. Finally, after examining and evaluating these resources and considering what the students already bring to the topic under exploration, the teacher should then develop a tentative plan of what will be explored and discussed in this instructional unit. Again, this plan should be viewed as a flexible, emergent, and working document that will change over time.

The third step, implementation, involves implementing each lesson while being cognizant of and noting the kinds of dialogue that is developing. Teachers should pay close attention to the perspectives being represented as well as those that are absent. Prior to implementing each subsequent lesson, teachers should critically reflect on what was discussed in the previous lessons and what was missing. Then, he or she should use this information to guide the direction of the upcoming lessons. For example, in a discussion of Rosa Parks, a teacher might notice that during the textual dialogue the children posed many questions related to the role of other prominent African American women during this time period. Using the children’s questions as a guide, the teacher might amend or expand the subsequent lesson to include information related to other significant African American women and their contributions such as Septima Clark.
The fourth step, connection, involves drawing linkages across the information and concepts discussed in each lesson. This phase is important because it works against developing piecemeal or disjoined conceptions of the histories of racial/cultural groups in society. In as much as each lesson attends to discrete moments in history, this fourth phase aids students in seeing the histories of particular racial/cultural groups within broader and composite contexts. For example, in addition to discussing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s role in the historic ‘March on Washington’, a teacher might revisit the contributions and methods of Harriet Tubman toward eradicating slavery and racism as a means of comparing and contrasting the significance of passive versus aggressive methods of resisting White supremacy.

The fifth and final step, revisit, involves revisiting as much of the questions that emerged during the initial unit implementation as possible. So, for example, a teacher may realize at the completion of the unit that the students in his or her class had a number questions related to the Middle Passage and Slave Capture that were not able to be answered—given constraints on time and or resources. To respond to this issue, a teacher might develop a ‘follow-up’ mini-unit with a series of lessons devoted exclusively to these two topics. Again, the teacher would begin this process by adhering to the suggestions in steps 1-4. Further, by adhering to these five steps, it is likely that children will develop deeper, richer, and critical understandings of the histories of racial/cultural groups in society.
Step 5: Revisit
*Revisit previous questions while integrating new concepts

Step 4: Connection
*Draw linkages across past and present concepts, perspectives, figures, and learning.

Step 3: Implementation
*Implement each lesson while being attentive to and noting the dialogues and questions that emerge.

Step 2: Resource Acquisition and Evaluation
*Gather tentative materials/resources to be used
*Examine, critique, and evaluate for usefulness

Step 1: Dialogue
*Begin with dialogue related to what children already know and what they would like to know

Figure 5.1: Contextually Emergent and Recursive Approach to Critical, Anti-Racist Pedagogy


**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the data from this study I make several recommendations for future research. First, I recommend that future research related to critical, anti-racist pedagogy in early childhood settings investigate the notion of curriculum transformation as a year long process. Data from the present study reveal several different types of tensions I experienced as I engaged in the unit. Yet and still, due to both issues of feasibility and time, the present study investigated my experiences while teaching critically about African American history within a relatively short period of time. Consequently, it is difficult to project the future directions these tensions will assume. Therefore, to understand the nature of critical, anti-racist pedagogy and the teachers’ experiences over a more prolonged period of time, I recommend that future research in this area last for the duration of an entire school year. Further, some subsequent research questions that might drive future research in this area include:

1) **What kinds of tensions do I experience as I engage in critical, anti-racist pedagogy throughout the school year?**

2) **What are some explanations/sources of these tensions?**

3) **How does the nature of these tensions shift over the course of the school year?**

4) **How do I respond to/mediate these tensions throughout the school year?**

The second recommendation for future research in this area concerns the salience of racial identity while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, my racial identity played an important role in this study as it was used to inform and direct many of the curriculum decisions I made. However, given the fact that the majority of both the pre-service and in-service teaching force is not African American, an important question arises. That is: What is the nature of a White teacher’s experiences while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy in a predominately African American classroom? Although data from the present
study suggest that tensions will emerge for most teachers engaging in this form of pedagogy, we are unsure as to the specific role racial identity plays in this work. Thus, future research in this area might exist in the form of case studies of anti-racist educators of different racial backgrounds (i.e., White and Black or Black and Native American). Further, this will allow us to better understand different ways in which racial identity influences the nature of this work.

Closely related to the second recommendation for future research, a third recommendation for future research pertains to the relationship between critical, anti-racist pedagogy and the racial identities of the students involved. As consistent in most urban classroom settings, the students in my classroom were predominately African American and working class Whites. As a result, the question inevitably becomes: What are the experiences of critical, anti-racist educators in predominately White and middle class settings? Again, while data from this study suggest that tensions will occur for teachers engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy, it is, nonetheless, likely that the nature of these tensions will differ across different contexts. Thus, I recommend that future research on this topic examine the nature of critical, anti-racist educators’ experiences in predominately White settings as a means of better understanding the significance of setting/context in this work. Further, this might best be facilitated in research that employs critical ethnographic or critical auto ethnographic methodologies.

A fourth recommendation for future research in this area is to conduct either ethnographic or focus group interviews with children while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy. In the present study I opted not to conduct interviews with the children in my classroom, because the primary purpose of this study was to examine my first hand experiences while engaging in this form of pedagogy. While student participation and thinking was included in the overall analysis, it was, nonetheless, used almost exclusively to better understand my teaching experiences. As such, there is much that remains to be known related to children’s
thinking and experiences while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy. Thus, I recommend that future research related to critical, anti-racist pedagogy and early childhood education place less emphasis on the teacher’s experiences and more on the children’s experiences. Further, an example of a broad research question that might drive future inquiry in this area is: What is the nature of students thinking/experiences while engaging in critical, anti-racist pedagogy and curriculum?

A fifth recommendation for future research in this area relates to parental perceptions and attitudes toward critical, anti-racist pedagogy. Data from the present study reveal that some White parents in my classroom held oppositional attitudes toward the content embodied in a critical and anti-racist approach to teaching and learning about African American history. This finding raises important questions related to the perceptions and attitudes of the other parents in the classroom. What were the perceptions/attitudes of the other parents toward this form of pedagogy? How did these perceptions/attitudes impact what students came to believe and understand about race and racism. How did these perceptions/attitudes differ across race? Parent attitudes/perceptions toward critical, anti-racist pedagogy become worth investigating if we give consideration to Ramsey’s (2004) argument that much of what children ultimately come to believe about race will be affirmed and or disconfirmed by what they learn about race at home. According to Ramsey, it is likely that parents will expand, confirm, or even disconfirm what teachers teach related to race and racism. More importantly, as Ramsey further points out, there is a strong possibility that parental perspectives on race and racism will have a more direct and longer lasting impact (both positive and negative) on children’s perspectives. Hence, I recommend that future research in this area investigate parental perceptions and attitudes toward critical, anti-racist pedagogy, as well as the ways in which these perceptions and attitudes outside of school influence children’s understandings of race and racism in school.
A sixth recommendation for future research pertains to methodology. In the present study, I chose to utilize a critical action research methodology as a means of examining issues of power, race, and racism within the institutionalized curriculum. Findings from this study reveal tensions I experienced over the course of the study and the ways in which the students developed increased levels of critical racial consciousness. Yet and still, given the relatively short duration of the study, little can be concluded related to how these tensions shift or are mediated over the course of several years. In like manner, much is still left to be know related to how children’s thinking and consciousness related to race and racism shifts or changes over time. Thus, I recommend that future research in this area be longitudinal in nature. Further, some questions that might drive longitudinal research on this topic are: What tensions do teachers experience as they engage in critical, anti-racist pedagogy over the course of the early childhood education experience (P-3)? In addition, how do these tensions shift over time?

A final recommendation for future research in this area I shall discuss here relates to the experiences of teachers at varying places and degrees of expertise in their teaching careers. While the findings from the present study reveal different tensions I experienced as I engaged in critical, anti-racist pedagogy, it must not be overlooked that I have nearly a decade of teaching experience—therefore, I am viewed by many as a veteran or expert teacher in the profession. As a result, it likely that my perspectives and approaches toward practice in general and anti-racist pedagogy in particular are quite different from those of novice and or beginning teachers. Hence, to better understand the ways in which professional experience influences this form of pedagogy, I recommend that future research compare and contrast the experiences of both veteran and beginning teachers while engaged in critical, anti-racist pedagogy. Further, to facilitate this goal, future research might assume the form of comparative case studies of two or more veteran teachers and two or more beginning teachers.
Final Thoughts

Racial demographics in classrooms across the United State promise to continue to become increasingly diverse as we journey through the remainder of the 21st century. With no decrease in these changing demographics in sight, multicultural theorists call for teachers at all levels of education make adequate and appropriate responses to these changes in terms of what they teach (curriculum) as well as how they teach (pedagogy). While it was once assumed that this responsibility lies solely in the hands of those who teach students at the later part of elementary, more research is beginning to point out the need for early childhood educators to share in this burden of responsibility.

With that being said, I attempted to respond to this challenge within the present study. As an early childhood teacher researcher, I attempted to engage in the daunting yet necessary task of enlisting my students in a critical discussion of race and racism as it related specifically to the historical experiences of African Americans in the United States. Although findings from this study indicated a series of internal and external challenges/tensions I experienced while engaging in this form of practice, they also indicated ways in which my students developed increased levels of critical racial consciousness. Therefore, I echo the call for more early childhood researchers and educators to continue to pursue anti-racist pedagogy as both a research phenomenon and a pedagogical practice; in that, there is still much more we can learn and do to make schools and classrooms more racially just places for students of all racial backgrounds.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In Merlin C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching (pp.119-161). New York: Macmillian.


Children’ Literature:


Kamma, A. (2004). *If you lived when there was slavery in america*. Scholastic: New York.


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APPENDIX A

LESSON 1

Time: 30 Minutes

Texts: Kamma, A. (2004). If You Lived When There Was Slavery in America
Scholastic: New York.

Key Terms: slavery, slaves, masters

Materials: Vocabulary cards (slavery, slaves, masters), presentation board with objects representing different perspectives and objects (shackles, whips, slave ships, slave castles
If I were being captured…. (worksheet)

Procedures:

Introduction/Background

Begin by explaining that “today we will be talking about slavery”.

Teacher says: Long long ago many African people lived on the continent of Africa (Point to the map for emphasis). Many European or White people lived on the continent of Europe (Point to the map). Many of the English people wanted to find servants or workers who they didn’t have to pay much money. So, they decided to travel to Africa and capture some of the African people and turn them into slaves.

Let’s listen and learn more from the story.
Read pages 1-13 in the text. Discuss each page as questions arise.

Explain that Africans were captured and forced by walk through the slave cavern where the boarded a slave ship and were taken to the Southern portion of the U.S.

Show and discuss the first 10 pages in The Middle Passage.

Drama Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Let’s pretend we are Europeans who are capturing Africans. How did they act? What did they do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Groups</td>
<td>Let’s pretend we are both the Europeans and the Africans. How did they act? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Class—One student at a time</td>
<td>Let’s pretend we are walking through the ‘Point of No Return’. How did they act?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debriefing/Discussion

Assemble the whole class use photos aid in posing and answering the following questions:

1) How did you feel as you captured the slaves, why?
2) How did you feel as you were being captured?
3) What would you do if you were being captured?
Name ______________________________________________________

Directions: Write 3 sentences to answer to prompt on the lines. Draw a picture to match on the back.

| SLAVERY |

If I were being captured I would…

First I would…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Second I would…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Last I would…

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

LESSON 2

Time: 30-45 Minutes


Key Terms: Slave ships

Materials: Images of slave ships. Images of Africans on slave ships. “If you were on a slave ship..” (worksheet)

Introduction/Background

Procedures:

Begin by reviewing the previous lesson.

Teacher says—Last time we talked about slavery. Who remembers what continent the slaves came from? Who can tell me why European people decided to enslave the African people? Today we are going to talk about the journey or the trip from Africa to America.

Explain that once the African people walked through the slave castle they were forced to board a slave ship. Today we are going to talk about what it was like on the slave ship.


Show pictures from The Middle Passage that correspond with the lesson.

**Drama Structures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole class</th>
<th>Imagine you are an African walking through the ‘Door of no Return’. How did they act?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups of 2</td>
<td>Imagine you are slaves/masters walking through the ‘Door of No Return’. How did they act? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of 2</td>
<td>Imagine you are slaves/masters on a slave ship? How did they act? How would you act?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Debriefing/ Discussion**

1) How did it feel to be a slave?
2) How did it feel to be a slave master?
3) How are the two different?
4) What would you have done if you were on a slave ship?

**Language Arts**

Write three sentences about what you would do if you were a slave on a slave ship. Draw and color a picture to match. Share if time permits.
Journey To America

If you were a slave on a slave ship, what would you have done?

First I would have …

Next I would have …

Last I would have …
APPENDIX C

LESSON 3


New York.


Key Words: Plantation

Materials: Images of slave plantations, houses, and cotton fields

Procedures:

Introductions/Background

Review the previous information.

Teacher says—So far we have been talking about slavery. Ask a few background questions to refresh their memories. Today we will be talking about where the slaves worked and lived. They lived on a place called a plantation. Everyone say ‘plantation’. Let’s read and listen.
Read and discuss the rest of Now Let Me Fly by Dolores Johnson.

Read and discuss pages 14, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, If You Lived When There Was Slavery in America by Anne Kamma.

Drama Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Imagine we are all slaves picking cotton on the plantation and it is hot and we are tired.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Class</td>
<td>Imagine we are slave masters overseeing the slaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Groups</td>
<td>Imagine we are slaves/slave masters on the plantation. How did each group act?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debriefing/Discussion

1). What was it like being a slave working on the plantation?
2). What was it like being a slave master on the plantation?
3) Who had the worse job? Slave or slave master? Why?

Language Arts

Write a letter to a slave master. “Dear Slave Master”

Share letters if time permits.
Dear Slave Master,
APPENDIX D

LESSON 4

Time: 30 Minutes


Key Terms: Underground Railroad


Procedures:

   Introduction/Background

Begin by reviewing the previous lessons.

   Teacher says-- today we will be talking about what happened when the slaves tried to escape. Many of the slaves traveled on the ‘Underground Railroad’. Now, it wasn’t a railroad with a train and track. It was just called underground because it was a secret. It was call railroad because so many slaves traveled on it. Let’s read and listen.
Read and discuss Almost To Freedom by Vaunda Nelson.

Drama Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Let’s pretend we are slaves who are escaping on the underground railroad. How did the slaves act? What did they do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Class</td>
<td>Let’s pretend we are slave masters who are searching for escaped slaves. How did the slave masters act? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Groups</td>
<td>Let’s pretend we are slave masters/slaves. How did they act? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Arts

Many slaves were whipped and beaten for trying to escape. Tell 3 reasons why you would or would not try to escape. Draw a picture to match. Share if time permits.
SLAVE RESISTANCE AND ESCAPE

Name _____________________________

Directions: Tell 3 reasons why you would or would not try to escape if you were a slave. Draw a picture on the back to match.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would try to escape because…</th>
<th>I would not try to escape because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

LESSON 5


Time: 30 Minutes

Key Terms: Abolitionists

Key Figures: Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Fredrick Douglas

Materials: Images of Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Fredrick Douglass, If I were an abolitionist worksheet.

 Procedures:

   Introduction/Background

Begin by reviewing the previous lessons.

Teacher says—Today we are going to talk about a group of people who worked to end slavery. These people were called the abolitionists. Everyone say abolitionists. Some of these people were White and some of these people were Black. One slave who worked to lead other slaves to freedom was named Harriet Tubman. Let’s listen and learn about her.
Text Reading

Read and discuss A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman by David A. Adler.

Drama Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Imagine you are Harriet Tubman and the rest of us are runaway slaves. How did they act? What did they do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Class</td>
<td>Let’s pretend we are slave masters look for escaped slaves. How did they act? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Groups</td>
<td>Let’s pretend we are slaves, abolitionists, or slave masters. How did each of these groups act? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debriefing/Discussion

1) How did you feel as a runaway slave?
2) How did you feel as an abolitionist?

Language Arts

Write 3 things you would do to help the slaves if you were an abolitionist.
Directions: Tell 3 things you would do to help the slaves if you were an abolitionist. Draw and color a picture to match on the back.

First I would _____________________________________________________________

Next I would

________________________________________________________________________

Last I would _____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX F

LESSON 6

Time: 30 Minutes


Key Terms: Civil War, Confederate Army, Union Army

Materials: Images of Civil War, Confederate Flag, Union Flag

Procedures:

Introduction/Background

Begin by reviewing the previous day’s lesson. Explain that today we will be talking about how the South and the North decided to solve the slavery problem.

Teacher say—Today we will be talking about how the North and the South decided to solve the problem of slave. How many think that slavery should have ended? (ask for a show of hands) How many think that slave should not have end? (ask for a show of hands).

How do you think they should have ended slavery? (ask for student responses and make a short list)

Well the South or the Confederate Army decided to have a war with the North or the Union Army. This was called the Civil War. If the North won, slavery would end. But, if the South won slavery would continue. Let’s listen and learn.
Text Reading

Read and discuss pages 59-62 in *If you lived when there was slavery in America* by Anne Kamma.

Drama Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Groups—North and South Army</th>
<th>Imagine that you are fighting in the Northern/Southern armies. How did they act? What did they do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let’s enact that the South is loosing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The battle is over and the South lost. What did they do? How did they act?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did the North act when they won? What did they do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debriefing/Discussion

1) How do you think the South felt when they lost? Why?
2) How do you think the North felt when they won? Why?
3) How do you think the slaves felt? Why?

Language Arts

What other ways do you think they could have solved the problem of slavery. In stead of fighting…
Name ______________________________________________________________

Directions: Tell 3 other ways the problem of slavery could have been solved.

Instead of having a war, what could they have done to solve the problem of slavery?

First they could have …

__________________________

Next they could have…

__________________________

Last they could have …

__________________________
APPENDIX G

LESSON 7

Time: 30-45 minutes


Key Terms: Ku Klux Klan, Freedom

Materials: Images of Ku Klux Klan, letter to KKK worksheet

Procedures:

Introduction/Background

Begin by reviewing the previous day’s lesson. Explain that today we are going to talk about what happened after the slaves were freed.

Teacher says—Although the slaves were free by law, many Whites were still in favor of slavery. One group of people that continued to hate Blacks were the Ku Klux Klan. Let’s listen and learn about them.

Read and discuss pages 6-25.
**Drama Structures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class and 1 student</th>
<th>Imagine you are members of the KKK and you see a freed Black person walking down a road. How did they act? What did they do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Class and 4 students</td>
<td>Imagine you are a family of 4 and the KKK breaks in your house in the middle of the night. What did they do? How did they act?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Language Arts**

Write a letter to the KKK.
Dear Ku Klux Klan,
APPENDIX H

LESSON 8

Time: 30-45 Minutes


Key Terms: segregation, JIM CROW

Materials: Images of Civil Rights Movement (marchers, sit-ins, protests, etc)

Procedures:

Introduction/Background

Begin by reviewing the previous day’s lesson.

Teacher says—Today we are going to talk about something called segregation. Everyone say SE-GRE-GA-TION. This is when one or more groups of people are separated or apart from each other. Because of laws called JIM CROW laws, many Black and White people lived, worked, played, and went to school in separate places. They even went to separate restrooms and drank from separate water fountains. Let’s listen and learn.
Read and discuss pages 6-23 in The Civil Rights Movement: Journey to Freedom by R. Venable.

Drama Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1—4 Students (4 college students)</th>
<th>Let’s pretend we in the restaurant during the sit-in. What happened? How did they act? What did the do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 2—4 Students (police officers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the class—Whites in the restaurant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher--Waitress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debriefing/Discussion

1) How did you feel being arrested?
2) How did you feel arresting the college students?
3) How did you feel as the Whites at the restaurant?

Language Arts

Do you think they should have moved or stayed at the counter? Why or why not
Name _____________________________________________________________

Directions: Answer the question in the correct boxes below. Draw a picture to match on the back.

Do you think they should have or should not have stayed at the counter? Why or why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, I think they should have stayed at the counter…</th>
<th>No, I think they should have move…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First I think they should have stayed because…</td>
<td>First I think they should have moved because…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next I think they should have stayed because…</td>
<td>First I think they should have moved because…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last I think they should have stayed because…</td>
<td>Last I think they should have moved because…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

LESSON 9

Time: 30-45 Minutes


Key Terms: Boycott

Key Figures: Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr.

Materials: Images of the bus boycott

Introduction/Background

Begin by reviewing the previous day’s lesson.

Teacher says—Today we are going to talk about how many Black people fought without violence against JIM CROW laws. We are going to learn about a special person named Rosa Parks. Let’s listen and learn.

Read and discuss If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks by Faith Ringgold.
Drama Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Student- Rosa Parks</th>
<th>Let’s imagine we are all on the bus. How did Rosa Parks, the police, the driver, and the other White riders act? What did they do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Students- Police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Student-Bus Driver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the Class—Bus Riders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debriefing/Discussion

1) How do you think Rosa Parks felt when she was told to go to the back of the bus?
2) How do you think the bus driver felt when she refused to go to the back of the bus?

Language Arts

Write a letter to Rosa Parks in jail.
Dear Rosa Parks,