

SEEKING FOR CRITICAL LITERACY: A CASE STUDY ON HOW MIDDLE  
CHILDHOOD PRESERVICE TEACHERS TEACH FOR CRITICAL LITERACY IN  
THE SOCIAL STUDIES

DISSERTATION

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By

Edric Clifford Johnson, B.S., M.A., M.S.

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Cynthia B. Dillard, Advisor

Professor Brian Edmiston

Professor Laurie Katz

Approved by

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Advisor  
College of Education

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at the development of critical literacy for three preservice teacher participants, relevant support systems and pedagogies, as well as their ability to develop and use critical literacy approaches in the middle childhood school social studies curriculum that helped raised their critical consciousness and skills as critically literate teachers. For the purpose of this study, the research question is: Given both field experience and a social studies method course, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching?

This study also considers how preservice teacher participants' construct knowledge on critical literacy within the methods course and how outside factors have influenced their application. The participants started with their own literacy histories in order to began developing internalization and critical consciousness within the methods and field experience course. When they attempted to connect critical literacy into the field experience, the mentor teacher's support and knowing the students played an important role. Similar to all of the preservice teachers in the course, the participants had their own obstacles in the field experience. However, their critical awareness of the obstacles caused them to utilize their own problem posing situations as part of their

learning. Throughout the course, the participants took social action by using some of the critical literacy approaches that were presented as instructional strategies in the methods course. However, the participants were still internalizing two essential components of critical pedagogy in their own teaching: problem posing and dialogue. They acknowledged the value of problem posing and dialogue in their own learning, but had some difficulty using these methods in their own teaching. One implication for teacher education is to promote social studies preservice teachers to compose lesson plans that are directly related to issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.

Dedicated to my father,  
Clifford James Johnson  
(November 17, 1953 – December 18, 2005)

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## **VITA**

July 21, 1973.....Born – Fort Campbell, KY

1997.....B.S. Special and Elementary Education, Central Michigan University

1997-2000.....Teacher, Hamilton Community Schools

2000.....M.A. Elementary Education, Western Michigan University

2000-2003.....Teacher, Verona Area School District

2003.....M.S. Educational Administration, University of Wisconsin-Madison

2003-2006.....Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

## **FIELDS OF STUDY**

Major Field: Education

Studies in Social Studies Education, Elementary Education and Teacher Education



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

"I had initially believed white teachers who told me we did not read black authors because they had not written any books or any good books."

- bell hooks (2003), p.2

#### 20 years ago

Mr. Cleary, a seventh grade teacher, taught our social studies class the same way. He taught Ancient Civilizations straight out of the textbook. His lecture was always in a deep monotone voice as he slowly moved from one side of the room to the next. As a seventh grader, and like most adolescent teenagers, we became very disinterested in what Mr. Cleary had to say. In addition, I struggled completing the assigned readings out of the textbook. Growing up in a working class household and having no support for my reading difficulties, I sensed that I was never going to perform well in Mr. Cleary's class. In my mind, the students who were smart enough to understand the textbook had come from families of doctors, engineers, and lawyers. My working class background influenced my attitude that school in general, "was not a place intended for ME to succeed." The textbook reading was difficult and Mr. Cleary talked too fast. I had

trouble reading the questions on his tests. So in middle school, I was a “D+” social studies student. Throughout my own middle school education, my teachers would assign readings out of the chapter textbook and lecture for the entire class period everyday. Lecturing from one perspective did not pose any problems with the information given. Furthermore, social studies education seemed disconnected from my life. No topic or conversation seemed challenging. Given the characteristic of middle school students who desire personal competence and who are always seeking fairness, the classroom offered no motivation to become an active citizen. I developed an attitude to just deal with social studies: be disengaged, appear that I was taking good notes, accept that it was all in the past, and hope that I would at least get a passing grade, a D-!

#### 10 years ago

I was an undergraduate student and working towards my elementary teaching certification. Unfortunately, I found myself with similar attitudes. As a preservice student sitting in a social studies methods and field experience course, I would listen to my social studies methods professor tell stories about his safari trips to different parts of Africa. Meanwhile in the field experience portion of the course, I would observe my fifth grade mentor teacher lecture and outline the chapters out of the textbook for his or her students. During my first two years of social studies teaching, I taught the way I was taught: I lectured and outlined out of the textbook. However, after the first two years of teaching, there was an important turning point in my social studies teaching career.

#### 5 years ago

I was relocated to another school and grade level. I immediately asked the principal if I could be the elementary science teacher, but instead, given my experiences

and certification I was assigned social studies. Because of the state standardized tests, I had to prepare my new fifth grade social studies students to write persuasive analytical papers where they had to take stances on a public policy issues. The task seemed too difficult at first. However, I forced myself to step back from this false thinking. My fifth grade students did extremely well on the standardized state test. However, I believe their success was not simple luck, but the changes I made as a teacher. The summer before that school year, I strategically planned for my teaching. As I continued my teaching, I took some graduate courses about social studies and drama integration, and I was beginning to see the possibilities for powerful social studies learning through critical literacy. As the year began and progressed, I began to express more love and faith in my students, finding ways to involve their own identity in the learning process. When I was relocated to a new school as the new fifth grade social studies teacher, that was the point when I began to raise my own consciousness, and began the desire for a transformation of my own teaching into something more meaningful for my students.

### 2005

As a graduate teaching assistant, I taught my first social studies methods course at the university. I asked my preservice teachers to describe their own middle school social studies experiences. Their stories unfolded, one right after the other all were similar to each other. And as I listened, my heart was broken because their stories were similar to my own. As hooks (1994) articulates, "most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teaching reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal" (p. 35). Historically and currently, social studies education has not been a favorite subject for many students in the United States.



In one recent study by Morris and Hickey (2003), among all school subjects, students rated social studies at the very bottom. Forty-four percent disliked social studies out of boredom, while thirty-five percent of the students desire other subjects because it provides active learning (Morris & Hickey, 2003). Scholars remind us that students are more active in their learning when they can be personally and culturally engaged (Gay, 2000; Beck & McKeown, 2002; Tyson, 2002).

This chapter contains a brief description of the study relating to critical literacy and its practices in teacher education. Included is a statement of the problem to be studied, an explanation of the purpose of the study and the research question to be addressed, a list of definition terms, a description of the significance of the study, and a brief overview of the rest of this dissertation.

#### Critical Literacy in the Social Studies Methods: The First Day

On the first day of class, I asked my preservice teachers to think about what literacy instruction meant to the teaching of social studies. For example, what does it mean to teach for critical literacy in the social studies?

Some of the preservice teachers' answers were:

Critical literacy is a method to improve reading scores.

Critical literacy is being in-depth.

Critical literacy is having the ability to analyze social studies reading for better understanding.

After the first day of class, two articles on critical literacy were assigned. The first article set up the framework. It was Barbara Comber's *Critical Literacy: What Is It, and What Does It Look Like in Elementary Classrooms?* The second article was Steven Wolk's

*Teaching for Critical Literacy in Social Studies.* After my preservice teachers read the two articles, I asked the same question during the second day of class: What does it mean to teach for critical literacy in the social studies? Many of their responses were directly as result of the readings from the two journal articles.

Some of the preservice teachers' answers were:

Critical literacy questions race, gender, class, and other social issues represented in the text.

Critical literacy is looking at a topic from many different perspectives since any give perspective can have a bias view.

Critical literacy means to challenge what is being read.

Although they had read two articles and were able to produce responses that were a more accurate definition of critical literacy, it appeared that many of the preservice teachers did not gain an understanding of how critical literacy could influence their *practices* in social studies teaching. For example, in our classroom discussion during the second day of class, preservice teachers were not able to provide examples of dominant themes that could be examined for biases or multiple perspectives in a given historical social studies text. Simply by their ability to restate descriptions/definitions of critical literacy from the journal articles, I wasn't sure how they would actually be able to connect critical literacy approaches into their own teaching practices.

So I was interested in answering the questions: Given both field experience and a social studies method course, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching? Given the lack of critical literacy in today's social studies classrooms, how do preservice teachers become

critically literate and learn to overcome the challenges of teaching for critical literacy into their assigned field experience and in their future teaching?

### A Brief Description of the Study

This study took place in my social studies methods and field experience course at The Ohio State University. The topics covered in the course included multiple perspective taking, oral history interpretations, and exploring controversial issues. The class spent 10 weeks participating in discussions and activities on critical literacy approaches in the social studies as well as each student observing and teaching in a middle school field experience.

Most of the preservice teachers started the course with naïve perceptions about critical literacy. However, three separate profiles of preservice teachers were clear: 1) those without a commitment towards critical literacy; 2) those with a commitment towards critical literacy in the university classroom but who did not connect it in their actual teaching practice; and 3) those with a commitment towards critical literacy and who displayed some evidence of commitment in their actual teaching practice.

I chose to focus on the preservice teachers who showed commitment towards critical literacy in their actual teaching practice. I report here on the case studies of three female students: two White and one Korean American. The two White students were Stacie, a sophomore, and Britney, a senior. The Korean American student was Heather, a junior. I traced their attempts at critical literacy and its meanings by looking at their views of critical literacy, their reflections on the field experience, course readings, and classroom activities, their classroom teaching practices, and their definitions of critical literacy at the end of the course.

Drawing on a Vygotsky's (1981) sociocultural perspective of *internalization*, this study considered how particular experiences within a particular field experience-based context can raise Freire's (1970) perspective of *critical consciousness* that influences teacher practice concerning critical literacy and its strategic use when teaching social studies. Specifically, I wanted to understand how and if careful selected readings, practical instructional strategies, reflective field note writing, and interactive discussions about critical literacy in the social studies methods course can serve as a catalyst to actual teacher practice in the field experience portion of the course. In addition, I wanted to know how the actual teacher practice was enacted. Thus my research question: Given both field experience and a social studies method course, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching?

### Statement of the Problem

In social studies teacher education, we often promote inquiry. However, when middle school preservice students take part in their first social studies field experience, they often report back to us that schools are suffocating that inquiry. Teacher educators are concerned that preservice students are highly influenced by the field experiences and will eventually model their practice or way of teaching. This suffocation of inquiry has a rippling effect from school district curriculum mandates to teachers to preservice teachers to students.

This study explores this problem within the framework of critical consciousness and critical literacy within a social studies methods course and middle school field experience.

### Definition of Terms

*Internalization, critical consciousness, and critical literacy* are three terms that are applicable to this study.

*Internalization* is a self-regulatory process of combining personal existing models and new insights provided in a supporting learning context. Drawing from Vygotsky (1981), internalization occurs when our ideas or philosophies transition from objective knowledge to knowledge that becomes our own. As a result of this transition, we develop a commitment and plan of action on the newly developed insight that we constructed on our own.

*Critical consciousness* is the essence of problem-posing education. As a problem-posing educator, we continually re-form our insights and never claim to be an "all knower." The teacher is not a subject while teaching students as objects. Freire (1998) would suggest that we think of ourselves and others as "subjects" rather than "objects". We are able to accomplish this by abandoning the educational goal of deposit-making knowledge and lean on the work done by Freire (1970, 1973), through dialogue. Together, we are able to gain critical awareness of other obstacles and take into consideration the conditions they live in and its structural causes. Problem-posing education regards dialogue as way to unveil reality and then transform it.

*Critical literacy* has similar features to critical consciousness. It moves students to problem-pose and to be suspicious of deposit-making neutrality claims that are found in text. It is a critique around reading, writing, speaking, and listening especially focused on issues of power. Drawing from Leland and Harste (2005), being *critically literate* acknowledges that as subjects, we have our own set of biases, privileges, and non-privileges and we must acknowledge them. Also, the biases, privileges, and non-privilege of groups and individuals are visible, non-visible, or even purposefully hidden: These must be uncovered. Furthermore, when being critically literate, we have a deepened consciousness of the situation and develop new possibilities that support social justice.

### Purpose of the Study

Preservice teachers need to be critically literate before they themselves commit to using critical literacy approaches in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Doizer, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Zeichner, 1995, Leland & Harste, 2005; Ball, 2000). In order to achieve this, prospective teachers must expand their role by having them examine diversity and equity issues that involve themselves, community organizing, student's family and home practices, and the socialization that take place in schools (Conover & Searing, 2000; Lightfoot, 1983; Meier, 1995; Nieto, 2000b; Pang, 2005; Sleeter & Grant, 2003; Haberman, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000b). Moll (1990) and Ladson-Billings (2001) remind us that teachers must confront their ideologies in a social context that pushes them to ask questions and take social action. Thus, critical pedagogy is more than teaching techniques and the knowledge required in curriculum and

textbooks but include the political structure of the school as well a critical analysis of reality (Freire, 1970). Thus, the purpose of this study is to apply a critical lens to preservice social studies teachers' experiences in both their social studies methods course as well as their field experiences. More specifically my research question is: Given the lack of critical literacy in today's social studies classrooms, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching?

### Significance of Study

Wolk (2003) suggest that critical literacy move beyond the discipline or content or content area of reading. This study is significant in that it de-centers critical literacy from the reading teacher education community and examines it in relation to middle school social studies. Second, previous studies report how preservice social studies students respond to critical literacy practices in their university methods course (Ukpokodu, 2003; Ball, 2000; Hess, 2001; Barton & Levstik, 2003). This study not only examines preservice teachers' perspectives towards and attempts at critical literacy approaches within the university methods course, it further examines the context of their field experience as well. Looking at both sites provides a more holistic look at their teacher preparation and adds to the significance of the study.

## Overview of the Study and Dissertation

In this dissertation, working definitions of critical literacy in social studies, along with a review of the related literature and research are presented in chapter 2. Chapter 3 contains a detailed description of the qualitative methods that were used to address the research question and the data collection procedure. In Chapter 4, the analysis looks at the development of critical literacy for three preservice teacher participants, relevant support systems and pedagogies, as well as their ability to develop and use critical literacy approaches in the middle childhood school social studies curriculum that helped raised their critical consciousness and skills as critically literate teachers. In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of this study and provide recommendations for teacher education as it relates to critical literacy approaches.



## Chapter 2

### Review of the Related Literature

Given both field experience and a social studies method course, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching?

This literature review chapter examines a number of topics related to the stated research question. Because this study explores the use of critical literacy in a social studies context, this chapter will include an overview of critical literacy including its use in both middle childhood social studies and teacher education. A brief history of critical literacy and the way it has been both supported and resisted in the social studies field will be addressed. The connections between critical literacy and educational drama methods will provide a basis for discussion about supporting students and preservice teachers' development in becoming critically literate and using critical literacy approaches.

### Defining Critical Literacy

The term critical literacy can have shared assumptions towards social change, cultural diversity, economic equity, and political enfranchisement (Luke, 1997). As mentioned earlier in chapter one, critical literacy does not aim for students to simply have a basic understanding of a given text, but instead seeks to help students comprehend beyond the literal level and think about the function of the text (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Kretoivics (1985) defines critical literacy as providing students not merely with functional skills, but with the conceptual tools necessary to critique society along with its inequalities and injustices. Lankshear (1993) describes critical literacy as way to discover how everyday ways of reading and writing help create and maintain process and practices that benefit certain populations. While some critical literacy scholars stress the critique of society, others talk more about our personal involvements and social action with text. Ira Shor (1999) stresses the personal involvement in critical literacy by considering our own identity when reading text. He poses the question: "If language helps make us, how can we use and teach oppositional discourse so as to remake ourselves and our culture? (p. 1)." Shor discusses his own experiences of being working class and how that influences the way he reads the world. Maxine Greene (1995) pushes us to go beyond critiquing the world and to intervene with our use of social imagination, requiring us to create new visions of society. This too can be seen as a form of critical literacy.

Paulo Freire's approach to social action in Brazil was seen as intervention as well. Freire (1973) describes the Brazilian tradition:

The Brazilian tradition has not been to exchange ideas, but to dictate them; not to

debate or discuss themes, but to give lectures; not to work *with* the student, but to on him, imposing an order to which he has had to accommodate. By giving the student formulas to receive and store, we have not offered him the means for authentic thought; assimilation results from search, from the effort to re-create and re-invent (p. 38).

Freire (1973) recognized the role of schooling in reproducing an oppressive society and first worked in Brazilian communities in order to dissect the meaning of worlds in their lives and put them together in meaningful ways. This form of education was prohibiting any process of democratization and Freire wanted to help peasants understand how their schooling was used by the dominant interests to validate *their* own privilege. Thus Freire knew that the peasants had to excel in their studies to overcome their oppressors by developing new attitudes and habits of participation and intervention. To accomplish this, Freire (1973) accepted that the community had a challenge to overcome in addressing the high rates of illiteracy and that ideally a literacy program was part of the need, in order to achieve democracy (p. 39).

Today, Doizer, Johnston, and Rogers (2006) best summarize critical literacy as it pertains to this study:

For us, critical literacy involves understanding the ways in which language and literacy are used to accomplish social ends. Becoming critically literate means developing a sense that literacy is for taking social action, an awareness of how people use literacy for their own ends, and a sense of agency with respect to one's own identity (p. 18)

Further, becoming critically literate is to incorporate ones' own identity while identifying and analyzing the power behind any given text. When we are more aware if the intentions behind the text are supporting or discriminating our identity, we are then more capable to take social action. In other words, critical literacy is an awareness of when our own identity influences our critique which then causes us to have certain interpretations that drive us to take particular social actions.

There is shared agreement that critical literacy is social and cultural. Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers (2006) simply suggest that critical literacy consists of asking questions, seeking answers, and taking action. These three important components move us towards teaching and learning critical literacy. Wooldridge (2001) suggests the following principles are important for the critical literacy approach:

1. There are certain aspects of the way society is that we think students ought to be equipped to question (not destroy).
2. The tasks we set need to reinforce the idea that there are multiple readings and realities.
3. The tasks need to get students to actively engage with the learning, then do something with that learning, supporting students to work toward an informed personal meaning.
4. This is not a didactic approach. Meaning does not lie in the text; this is not about transmitting and alternative meaning. The way you give students access to texts is an important part of this which two pieces you select, in which order, emphasizes the selective nature of knowledge and information (p. 269).

McLaughlin and DeVoodg (2004) outline four main principles of critical literacy. First, critical literacy focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action. Second, it focuses on the problem and its complexity. Third, techniques are dynamic and adapt to the contexts in which they are used. Finally, critical literacy examines multiple perspectives (p. 54-55).

The similarities between those scholars are evident. In summary, I would articulate the components of critical literacy as:

- 1) questioning rather than reading at the literal level
- 2) gaining a better understanding of the text by complicating the reality with multiple perspectives or resources
- 3) reading texts critically
- 4) learning is transformed to action

These components of critical literacy can be seen in different settings. A child reading a social studies textbook or a preservice teacher observing another teacher's lesson can involve critical literacy. After reading a text critically, however, one makes a conscious choice to take a particular action.

### Major Approaches to Critical Literacy

Most approaches to critical literacy can be based in critical consciousness. Two methods towards critical literacy offered by Freire (1970) are problem-posing and dialogue. Problem posing is providing information while simultaneously questioning the information. Part of problem posing is to seek out individuals, voices, text, and perspectives that have been previously excluded (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2004). The

second, dialogue, is a discussion among people whose intelligence is valued equally. When approaching critical literacy strategies, the goal is to have students actively involved in problem posing and dialogue.

Literacy researchers/teachers of education courses will quickly warn that teachers want to know exactly how to teach critical literacy in their classroom (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers 2006). However, there is no unitary approach to critical literacy. Luke (1997) suggests that if “literacy education is not something technical/scientific but a normative social and cultural project, then the ways of constructing critical literacies likewise require critical analysis of the material conditions facing teachers and students (p. 6).” This underlying pedagogical approach is not linear, rather it is a range of dimensions from being critically literate to actual critical literacy approaches used in the classroom (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers 2006):

Central to this approach are texts that are connected to children’s lives and experiences, writing that provides a sense of agency, sensitivity to patterns of language use, and an ability to adopt multiple perspectives. However, equally important is developing critical literacy is the ability to feel comfortable with discomfort: understanding that important learning often begins by confronting issues we have learned to avoid (p. 43).

Auerbach (1999) offers a list of approaches that he labels as tools that can be utilized to draw out problem-posing and dialogue while at the same time developing literacy and language:

- **Charts** - to gather information about students' life histories, to compare cultural practices among different groups, and to elicit student goals
- **Pictures and photos** - to uncover themes and evoke responses
- **Key words** - to explore the significance of words and the issues they represent.  
The words become a way to link the discussion to further literacy activities
- **Language experience stories** - the teacher scribes while students dictate whatever they want to have written
- **Published materials** - to support or critique a theme
- **Codes (pictorial representations of problem themes)** - this term comes from Freire's concept of *codification* where the teacher creates or selects materials that represents a problem facing the students
- **Role plays and theatre techniques** - to explore themes while providing a context for language development
- **Student-generated writing** - a place for students to take risks and be encouraged to write for real communicative purposes (pp. 34-43).

There are of course problems related to using any single tool. In practice, Auerbach also suggests that a combination of different tools be used to explore any given theme. Barndt (1986) suggests the notion of a *tool kit* where teachers draw from concrete ways of representing an issue (textbook, drama, picture, etc.) in order to draw out dialogue and language or literacy work.

One way to teach for problem-posing is through the questioning and discussion of status characteristics like race, class, gender in school textbooks and children's literature. Critical teachers explore the textual practices in multicultural literature by using questions such as found in the work of Wooldridge (2001):

- What view of the world, or kinds of behaviors are presented as normal by the text?
- Why is the text written that way? How else could it have been written?
- What assumptions does the text make about age, gender, and culture (including the age, gender, and culture of its readers)?
- Who is silenced/heard here?
- Whose interests might be served by the text?
- What ideological positions can you identify?
- What are the possible readings of this situation/event/character? How did you get to that reading? (p. 261)

In problem-posing, readers question the author's message from a critical perspective (Beck & McKeown, 2002; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Readers have the power to envision alternate ways of viewing the author's topic, and raise questions of the voices that are represented in the text. In the elementary years, it is suggested we use multicultural literature that concentrates on controversies and oppressed groups (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998; Tyson, 2002). One study shows that using this kind of children's literature in urban social studies classrooms effectively help students articulate concepts of social action in their own lives and communities (Tyson, 2002).



### Critiques of Critical Literacy

Christian-Smith (1997) argues that it's too difficult for teachers to use critical literacy because "they face challenges stemming from social and political dynamics of classrooms, peers groups, and student's diverse backgrounds (p. 56)." Unfortunately, this sort of argument too often becomes the criteria for many preservice teachers to reject such literature and activities. In a study of two children's literature courses comprised of mostly White, middle class, females of European descent, it was found that most teachers reject certain literature text for the following reasons (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998):

1. The belief that a text is inappropriate for children because it might frighten or corrupt them by introducing them to things they don't or shouldn't know about.
2. The belief that a text is inappropriate for children because it fails to represent dominant social values or myths.
3. The belief that a text is inappropriate for children because it identifies racism or sexism as a social problem (p.289)

Another critique or concern is whether or not students are capable of critical consciousness. Leming (2003) highlights research studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's that suggests that youth had difficulty debating political and economic problems and that students were becoming less knowledgeable about American democracy. Students may not initially take interest in the issues or understand how to go about taking a stance on a public issue. Leming points out that frustrated students often have a difficult time coming up with a substantial defense for their argument. Arguments have the potential to be weak and criticism may equate to destructive criticism (Barr, Barth et

al., 1978) in the classroom. Barr (1978) concludes, “there is ample reason to believe that the critical literacy position is too difficult, dense, abstract, and impractical to apply to the every day tasks of ordinary teachers (p. 135).”

Another critique is that teachers face too many social and political issues in teaching. Doizer, Johnston, and Rogers in their study of inservice teachers note one teacher's response to critical literacy in the early portion of their graduate course:

I would really like to do something like this, but racial issues are not the place to start for an untenured teacher. Also, I would be afraid to do anything controversial. I know that I should make literacy culturally relevant, but I really do prefer to avoid the conflict. I just feel that there are enough terrible things happening in the world and I prefer not to dwell on the negative (p. 43).

The researchers further inform us that, over the course of the semester, the tension usually is lessened. The same teacher wrote at the end of the semester:

Putting an idea out there for the class and just letting it take off is a scary thing for me. What happens if it goes on the wrong direction? What if someone says something that is offensive to someone else? These are things that I used to think. I have realized the importance of teaching a child to see the issue from all different angles-teaching them that they can make a difference if there is something that they do not agree with. I am not so scared of this anymore and have seen the benefits in my first-grade classroom (pp. 43-44).

## Critical Literacy and Drama

Critical literacy begins to be established when the teacher and students move towards being the expert of authorship of their respective contributions to the classroom community rather than a set of fixed and prescribed knowledge (Wallace, 2001). Drama pioneer Dorothy Heathcote was one of the first scholars to combine drama and critical pedagogy. Heathcote's (1995) drama concept of "mantle of the expert" casts students in functional roles as knowledgeable and skillful experts. As knowledgeable and skillful experts, critical literacy actions such as inquiry, dialogue, critique, activism, multiple perspectives that show complexity, and social imagination are daily decisions where students think creatively and by themselves and can be a way to teach critically in the social studies (Wolk, 2003). Doyle (1993) states, "Drama as a tool of criticism allows students to see the promise in a society and can help form the consciousness of human agents who can then aid in the transformation of that society (p. 71)."

This section of the literature review examines the ways that critical literacy methods can be linked to educational drama. Words like "script", "text", and "theatre" in this literature review might give the impression that drama means a performance (like a Broadway show). However, drama is *not necessarily* a performance. It more importantly involves people connecting, discovering, and safely exploring various topics (Kelin, 2005). Whether scripted or not, O'Neill (1995) reminds us that drama is a way of thinking about life:

The key to both the power and the purpose of process drama and theatre lies in the fact that they not only permit but also demand that we discover other versions of

ourselves in the roles we play or watch other actors playing. We slip the bonds of our identities and participate in other forms of existence (p. 151).

Heathcote (1995) describes this effect as “The Brotherhoods” which allows us to realize that we are not alone in our life struggles. It encourages us to reach out to those experiencing similar feelings and circumstances and to empathize with others' experiences and situations.

### Juxtapositioning to Create an Alternative Text

Allowing the time and space to create an alternative text is one example of putting critical literacy in action. Juxtapositioning texts, photos, videos, stories, and lyrics to create an alternative text is a technique that helps demonstrate multiple perspectives as well as inequalities (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). An alternative text represents a different perspective about the topic the reader experiences (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). The text can be narrative or informational and can consist of oral, written, visual, or imagined representation, including but not limited to drawings, oral descriptions, dramatizations, and songs. By creating an alternative text, students perceive the text in a different way and begin to understand the complexity of the issue examined (p. 59). Alternative text created through the arts could possibly provide the tools and space for critical pedagogy and by extension, critical literacy.

Scholars have illustrated the potential connection between drama and critical literacy (Doyle, 1993; Boal, 1979; Rohd, 1998; Rummel & Quintero, 2006). Doyle (1993) who leans on critical theorists such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux summarizes the connection:

Critical theory of pedagogy can help teachers look at their practice in a fashion that will allow them to transform their work with students. Drama, I believe, can help break down some of the real barriers to transformative teaching and learning by opening fresh ways of "going about" the process of schooling. One of these ways has to do with helping students find their voices and with encouraging teachers to trade in voices of domination for voices of encouragement and empowerment (p. 9).

Some aspects of educational drama can help students think critically about texts and contexts, authority, and issues such as agency, prejudice, power in the lives of historical and contemporary characters.

#### Dialogue Practice: Drama Creates Dialogue

Theatre artist and educator, Michael Rohd (1998) bases his beliefs about drama on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, that is, that education is dialogue and that we learn by doing, not by being told or shown. Along with Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), Rohd believes that theatre can take place in a lab setting where students' have dialogue, problem solve, seek opinion, and practice solutions. Boal's work strongly influenced Rohd's book, *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: Hope is Vital* (1998). This book provides interactive theatre techniques that create dialogue improvisational scene work, where participant actually replace characters in the stories.

#### Critical Practice: Drama Can Creates Critique

The reproducing of plays offers the opportunities for students to critique. Hornbook (1997) stresses the idea of going beyond production of a dramatic text and to move towards *reproduction* as he puts is students in the work of playwright, actor,

director, and designer. A study by a history education methods professor by the name of Ronald Morris at Ball State University involved studying a seventh grade social studies classroom where students were raising their critical consciousness by critiquing and rewriting a historical script together (Morris & Hickey, 2003). Doyle (1993) reminds us that scripts are not neutral, value-free, asocial, or ahistorical. The seventh grade teacher named Mr. Welch wanted students to engage in plays that addressed middle school themes, social issues, and critiquing historical content (Morris & Hickey, 2003). Examples of some themes were interpersonal relationships, justice, and liberation. The historical content was centered on the origins of slave trade in Portugal. Rather than reading and performing a published play written by someone unknown to the students, it was the teacher's role to compose the play himself. The teacher, being the author, played a critical role in this creative apprenticeship process.

The play written by the teacher was not a masterpiece, nor should it be. The play started with essential historical concepts, 3-4 characters, one simple action, and a total of about 2-3 pages. Any play that the teacher wrote was more interesting, because the students knew the author of the play. Students were becoming critical of the teacher's attempt at writing plays and suggest multiple points in the play. Therefore, subplots were developed as the teacher and class co-constructed a new play. As students were utilizing their own tools, interpreting information from classroom discussions, and reflecting on their own experiences as middle school students, they eventually co-constructed a common understanding that became evident in their historical play (pp. 51-53).

In Mr. Welch's classroom, dialogue and the construction of knowledge were evident, supporting the Vygotskian theory that is imbedded in social constructivism (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). They conceptualized the meaning of an effective and moral play about slavery where multiple perspectives and personal significance were included. The students were developing critical consciousness (the ability to view historical figures as subjects rather than objects) as they were decoding a script and reproducing a play together (Doyle, 1993).

#### Thinking Beyond the Known: Drama May Create New Visions or Possibilities

Drama contributes to new visions that provide us with hope. It is an on going process of community making, turning stories into collective performances which mobilizes collective actions into community development (Kelin, 2005). Albany Park Theatre Project is one example, focused on working class and poor immigrants in Chicago. In the project, they negotiate and renegotiate community identity and culture while constructing a play from stories of people with different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds (Wiley & Feiner, 2001). This furthers a notion put forward by Wiley and Feiner (2001) called representational authority, where you are forced to examine the relationship between the community and the dominant culture. Critical literacy teachers can explore non-Western, subjugated, and indigenous voices in order to appreciate the nature and causes of human suffering and the processes of domination (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 26). These performances are not always harmonious. Rather, problems, conflicts, and contradictions should be expected in the piece (Denzin, 2003). The idea behind critical literacy is that you attempt to involve multiple perspectives to tell a whole story or image. However, Doyle (1993) reminds us:

In a critical pedagogy, drama should not simply represent society. If drama is a mere reflection of social reality, it can have little emancipatory hope. The strength of drama is that it can show alternative visions of the relationships between the individual and society (p. 84).

In addressing Freire's (1973) critical consciousness through critical drama, Doyle (1993) continues:

At it's best a critical drama pedagogy can make breaks with dominant expectations and alienate the familiar. Drama must become, in the process of schooling, a tool toward a consciousness of what might be. In so doing drama can aide in bringing about needed changes, that through critical consciousness, could result in a freer human development (p. 89).

Creating new visions of society seems to be a form of critical literacy. A theatre group in the Netherlands applied Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in an intervention program for teenage mothers. In the construction of their performance, they remade a new vision of society for themselves, first in their imagination and later in their actual lives (Mason, 2001). For them, and for many, the drama performance was an encouragement to go on with their own lives.

#### Creating Personal Significance: Drama Creates Student Connections

Daniel Kelin's *To Feel as Our Ancestors Did: Collecting and Performing Oral History* (2005) is a user-friendly text that demonstrates the ways drama can be used to explore and perform stories of family, community, and heritage in the middle school classroom. This kind of text supports culturally responsive teaching and helps provide structures to perform stories that acknowledge the cultural heritage of different ethnic



groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum (Gay, 2000). The process involves students in oral history interviews, choosing certain material to explore, creating and performing stories, and sharing their alternative text with peers (Kelin, 2005). These dramatic scripts created from field notes and transcripts are known as editing reality (Denzin, 1997) and allows preservice students to experience firsthand on having the power to select information and telling a certain story.

#### Drama as One Form of Art: Considering Other Forms

Although drama was the primary tool for critical literacy in the social studies methods course explored in this study, it's important to note that we consider other forms of art might be a catalyst for critical literacy. This includes but is not limited to literature, pictures, paintings, dance, music, etc. Critical literacy approaches can be identified in Eisner's (2002) rationale of "things the arts can teach." Some of Eisner's beliefs include:

1. The arts can teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer
2. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
3. The arts teach children that in complex forms in problem solving.
4. The arts teach students to think through and within a material.
5. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said (pp. 70-92).

Overall, the arts provide ways to express the variety of characters in histories in a way that poses problems, something that reading only dominant texts cannot and reflects alternative ways of knowing, stories from voices that have traditionally been silenced in the United States (Rummel & Quintero, 2006). The end goal is not to mold children into

predetermined citizens rather use the arts to invite opposition and subject to change (Doyle, 1993). .

### Social Studies Education: Beyond Citizenship Transmission

While one aim for the elementary and middle social studies is citizenship, there is little research on how students develop a sense of citizenship, tolerance, and “deliberative character” (Conover & Searing, 2000). Also, people within the field disagree on what it means to prepare a good citizen. The words “citizenship,” “thinking,” “values,” and “problem solving” are employed the same, but it’s clear that social studies teachers do not share the same association of meanings for those words especially when citizenship transmission is still taking place (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1978). For example some people believe that the purpose of citizenship is to develop a basic understanding and appreciation of American values, institutions, and practices. The fundamental value is to conform to the norms, holds certain beliefs, and is loyal to values so everyone can function in a civil society (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1978). However, this type of citizenship transmission does not address issues such as globalization, diaspora, and differences that exist within a single culture.

A critical question for citizenship education is “how do students connect themselves as citizens?” Conover and Searing (2000) found after interviewing more than 200 children and adults that most did not grasp how to apply their minimal understanding of citizenship to themselves or what it means to act in the future. Many students believed if they obey the law, vote and are patriotic, they are citizens. An emphasis of the right to vote was emphasized as being an active citizen. Voting is one thing, but deliberation of

the issues must be evident in the democracy (Gutmann, 2003). One of the main purposes of democratic education is to equip students with the capabilities for deliberation thus raising their critical consciousness. Involving political discussion and tolerance must be viewed as obligations and remembered by students and teachers in schools (Conover & Searing, 2000). For example, the attempt to define a citizen in America and transmitting it will always possess controversies and contradictions. From a critical point of view, we might stop exhorting students to be good citizens according to our own unquestioned view of good in the textbook and help them instead to ask good questions about their own values and those of others (Engle & Ochon, 1988). The position of critical literacy in social studies involves civic learning that questions and affirms our identities in relationship for social justice to a collective group. Critical consciousness about the quality and purpose of schooling and human life rather than fixed knowledge and values, should play a central role (Engle & Ochon, 1988; Giroux, 1988). However, fixed knowledge and values found in most textbooks become the central role for most social studies learners.

### How Textbooks Drive the Curriculum

Social studies textbooks are usually first introduced in middle grades and often heavily used. Fourth grade teachers responding to a survey nationwide reported that the most popular instructional activity on a weekly basis was the social studies textbook (Chapin & Messick, 2002). However, using the textbook does not necessarily involve the development of critical literacy skills that improve social studies learning. Chapin and Messick (2002) report that:

Students in the social studies are frequently asked to do such tasks as reading textbooks and using writing to fill worksheets. In fact, some of the least used activities such as writing a three-page report, participating in debates and mock trials, and writing letters require higher levels of literacy, which perhaps the reason that they are not found more frequently in classrooms (p. 263).

In terms of developing critical literacy within the social studies, Chapin and Messick conclude students using critical literacy also develop research and information skills to answer questions and develop presentation and communication skills.

The monoculture curriculum often found in textbooks denies students the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, perspectives, and understanding to be gained from studying other cultural groups' experiences and attaining the intercultural competency to work with everyone (Ukpokodu, 2003). Instead of the monoculture curriculum, Howard Zinn (2005) suggests that:

By juxtaposing historical text and content whereby various points of reference are taken into account, students, in particular, and the public, in general, will begin to be able to link the necessary bodies of knowledge to develop a more critical and comprehensive understanding of reality. If our education systems don't change, schools will continue to produce highly literate individuals who willfully or unwillfully do not see the obvious (p. 23).

However, Barton and Levstik (2003) warn that educational systems may be difficult to change. Their study shows that although experienced teachers were trained in critical literacy practices (such as juxtaposing and interpreting texts), most revert to traditional instruction feeling where content coverage is most efficient and important. This replaces

democratic critical vision by having low expectations of students (Kincheloe, 2004). In one study, teachers preoccupied with covering prescribed material in the textbook showed a lower sense of efficacy particularly impacting low achieving students than those who emphasized in-depth study (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Social studies textbooks usually lack multiple perspectives although the very job of a historian is to be a historical thinker, to explore and interpret events in multiple perspectives. When you passively intake history through one perspective, you defy what a historian actually does (Barton & Levstik, 2003). Most schools claim that there is no room for teachers to examine multiple perspectives, to do research on their own, and produce knowledge would conflict with prevailing interpretations (Kincheloe, 2004). In many cases, both public schools and universities present cold facts as if they are true.

An example can be taken from a recent textbook publication that was promoted at the 2003 National Council of Social Studies Conference. The textbook was titled *History Alive! The United States* (Hart, 2002). As you read about the Civil Rights Movement (pp. 451-465), you read about Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, James Brown, Thurgood Marshall, and Malcolm X, all African American people. If only reading the textbook, however, you also gain misunderstandings of people and their actions. For example, textbooks tend to depict Rosa Parks as apolitical and spur of the moment in her bus boycott defense. But Harris (1996) reminds us that her autobiography documents her long-term involvement in political action. It's not sufficient from a critical pedagogical standpoint to read only the textbook section or one picture book on Rosa Parks.

### Critical Literacy in K-12 Social Studies

Wolk (2003) recommends that the social studies classroom is a suitable context for critical literacy. Today, several education scholars suggest that the core of social studies should be integrated with problem posing, a major characteristic of critical literacy in citizenship education (Gutmann, 2000; Hess, 2001; Leming, 2003; Mason & Silva, 2001; Parker, 2001). All of these scholars would suggest that “teacher proof” packages that support democratic character and citizenship transmission provide low level literacy and are inadequate in schools. These type of “teacher-proof” curriculum packages support more of a management pedagogy theory (Giroux, 1988). Unfortunately, many teachers reported having difficulty in setting up and organizing a problem-posing curriculum in the social studies classroom (McAulay, 1960). More recently, empirical evidence shows that although teachers commonly believe that social studies should involve critical literacy practices that provide: a) controversial issues; b) tolerance and open-mindedness; and c) developing an understanding of different cultures (Gutmann, 2000). However few pedagogically practice these beliefs (Gutman, 2000).

Critical literacy may embrace antiracist and anti-oppressive education. It pushes students to examine many things such racism, sexism, class-bias and homophobia from multiple sources (Kumashiro, 2001; Kincheloe, 2004). In the context of learning to teach citizenship and history through critical literacy, Zinn (2005) reminds us:

Instead of engaging students in a distorted triumphalist national history lesson, educators need to ask students to look at U.S. history through a magnifying glass so they can see the grotesque and barbaric images of slavery, Vietnam, class

conflict, gender exploitation, the sabotage of democracy in Latin American countries, and know the illegal war waged against Iraq (p. 21).

Several scholars suggest that critical literacy promotes better critical thinking in the social studies (Lankshear & Knobel, 1997; Beck & McKeown, 2002; Giroux, 1988; Hennings, 1993; Irvin, Lunstom, Lynch-Brown, & Shepard, 1995; Massey & Heafner, 2004; Wolk, 2003; Zinn, 2005). Wolk (2003) says that rather than seeing critical literacy as an addition, teachers can select critical literacy knowledge and perspectives from current existing social studies topics. He continues his stance by encouraging K-12 teachers to break away from the textbook and include strategies for critical literacy in the social studies classroom. As part of the study, I examine if and how preservice teachers teach for critical literacy in their social studies classroom. In his approach, some of the essential ideas on teaching for critical literacy into the social studies are as follows:

- Children have beliefs about issues of race, culture, gender, and sexual orientation and are literally bombarded with information, texts, and images. Students and teachers need to critique such texts.
- Critical literacy requires “social imagination” which is “the capacity to invent vision of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets and in our schools” (Greene, 1995)
- Explore concepts of prejudice, oppression, and genocide and connect those ideas to the curriculum and students lives.
- Critical literacy asks questions like: Whose knowledge is this? Where did it come from? Whom might this knowledge benefit? What perspectives are missing? What voices are silenced?

- Methods such as inquiry, deliberation, activism, multiple perspectives, daily decisions in which students think creatively and think by themselves (pp. 101-105).

### Becoming Critically Literate in Teacher Education

From the literature presented thus far, we can conclude that to teach in critically ways, teachers must become critically literate themselves, values social justice, and have a sense of the cultural contexts in which they work (Doizer, Johnston, and Rogers, 2006). Researchers recognize that preservice students need to be critically literate before they commit to using critical literacy approaches in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Doizer, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Zeichner, 1995). According to Leland and Harste (2005), critically literate, preservice teachers, must: 1) understanding systems of meaning; 2) interrogate personal involvement; and 3) take social action (pp. 67-68).

#### *Understanding Systems of Meaning*

The first dimension of becoming critically literate is *understanding systems of meaning*. This dimension expresses the need to critically examine the inequalities and social injustices including beliefs and practices that are accepted by the dominant culture (Leland & Harste, 2005). Preservice teachers who are asked to do no or minimal reflective inquiry on the organizations and cultures of schools are less likely to make meaningful connections to diversity issues in schools (Posner, 2005; Zeichner, 2002). In teacher education programs, we often ask preservice teachers to define themselves as teachers and inquirers within the socio-political contexts of schools. Before doing so, Posner (2005) further recommends that we ask preservice teachers to critically examine



the power dynamics in the socio-political context of a given school. An additional feature of the problem is the field experience component of teacher education programs. Research shows many field experiences end up emphasizing procedural concerns of time management, lesson planning, and classroom management thus offering little or no bridge between practice and theory (Moore, 2003; Passe, 1994; Zeichner, 2002).

It is assumed that learners and teachers' diverse life experiences and identities influence how learning and teaching take place in and across different environments (Gutmann, 2003; Nieto, 2000; Yon, 2000). Education does not just occur within a single classroom, it also occurs in the school community. Prospective teachers must expand their role by having to examine diversity and equity issues that involve community organizing, student's family and home practices, and the socialization that take place in schools (Conover & Searing, 2000; Lightfoot, 1983; Meier, 1995; Nieto, 2000b; Pang, 2005; Sleeter & Grant, 2003).

### *Interrogating Personal Involvement*

The second dimension of becoming critically literate is *interrogating personal involvement*. Dewey (1916) saw individuals made up of multiple selves, and suggested that their schooling needed to promote balance and integration across multiple associations (pp.307-310). As human beings, we possess multiple identities and sometimes those identities can affirm or contradict the community we live in. Yon (2000) argues for the need to re-examine questions of culture, race, and identity as we experience an increase of globalization, diaspora, and difference in schooling.

Interrogating our own culture is highly contested space, especially if it starts to question the shared characteristics or power structures within systems of schools and

society. Differences that exist within a defined culture could potentially be viewed as disruptive. Critical theorist Paulo Freire (1970) rejects any theory that creates a monolithic entity. He analyzes oppression where the object of oppression cuts across such factors as race, class, gender, culture, language, and ethnicity (Macedo, 2000) . Some critics claim that, "multicultural politics include being preoccupied with supporting particularistic identities and therefore are either oblivious or hostile to egalitarian principles" (Gutmann, 2003, p. 19). For example, among Hispanics, racial identity can promote a sense of belonging; meanwhile sexual orientation can exclude members due to cultural and religious beliefs (Kumashiro, 2002). Cultural identities are full of ambivalent and contradictory positions (Yon, 2000). Nieto's (2000b) sociocultural analysis of twelve students supports the idea of an integrated cultural identity, and that deep-seated beliefs or even stereotypes are disrupted when examining each person on their own terms. Within stories and dialogue, we begin to interrogate our personal involvement in the system of meaning. Another way to put it is that we recognize our biases and prejudices. This dimension has been characterized by being able to acknowledge your own complicity in maintaining inequitable power systems and relationships (Leland and Harste, 2005).

However, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) suggests that many White teachers are uneasy when it comes to addressing their own privileges and their students' differences, especially racial differences. Several research studies suggest that most preservice teachers conform to the white middle-class ideology that anyone can attain the "American Dream" through hard work (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990). It is important to acknowledge that changing teacher's perspectives towards diversity persons is a long

process. Gomez (1996) concluded that it takes two or more semesters (32 weeks or more) before substantial reconsideration of diverse learners take place among preservice teachers. The heart of the problem is that prospective teachers have difficulty in developing their own identities (Haberman, 1991). Part of the goal of teacher education is to push preservice teachers to explore their own identity, their personal involvement.

#### *A Commitment to Social Action*

The third dimension in developing into a critically literate individual is *a commitment to social action* that somehow addresses the perceived inequities (Leland & Harste, 2005). Observing social action among teacher education students is less studied among the three dimensions. However, Rummel and Quintero (2006) examined how preservice teachers demonstrate social action in the way they use art in their critical literacy curriculum. Their observational case studies of student teachers show that critical literacy combined with various culturally based art forms, addresses complex issues in an integrated and participatory way. Their preliminary finding shows that the ultimate action of student teachers demonstrating critical literacy comes not only after the reading and activities, but in the sometimes tiny steps of choice built in the whole activity process. This finding further suggests that critical literacy approaches in preservice teachers may not be extremely obvious and grand, but rather small and gradual.

#### Critical Literacy in Teacher Education

Teachers can develop a philosophy of critical literacy through their experiences in their teacher education program. Ball (2000) conducted a study to examine how the exposure of theoretical readings and practical activities engaged preservice students in

dialogic conversations that impacted their philosophy thoughts on issues of literacy, teaching, and diversity. She frames her work in a course that she taught:

As these teachers begin to move beyond quoting the words of theorists to populate the words of others with their own intentions, when they can appropriate the words and adopt them to their own purposes, then we have evidence that internalization is occurring (pp. 247-248).

According to Ball (2000) “*Internalization* is the process through which developing teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices toward transformative position of reflective commitment needed to guide them in their generative development” (p. 229). Ball describes this learning process as risk-taking and activity based:

As preservice and practicing teachers come into teacher education programs with their own literacy histories, they discuss their ideas interactively; challenging preexisting assumptions, teach, write, and read new information; and reflect on theories and practices within the learning contexts (p. 231).

Thus, the transformation of philosophy from the teacher and student process (external activity) to the place where knowledge becomes one own (internal activity) is called *internalization*. Drawing on Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective on internalization, Ball’s research considered how particular experiences within a social context provides reflection and growth that alters teachers’ philosophies concerning literacy and its strategic use (Ball, 2000). A conclusion of this study is that teacher educators must take into account teachers’ own literacy experience, their self-perceptions of being critically literate, and their perceptions on how critical literacy can enhance teaching and learning.

In her study, Ball does not address the importance of the field preservice teachers' experience component in developing critical literacy. In Moll's (1990) discussion of social theory, he explains Vygotsky's "emphasis on the social context of thinking and the study of educational change." One of the purposes of this study is to push preservice teachers, through dialogue, to use critical dialogue to confront their ideologies and search for new "meaning and significance" (Moll, 1990, p. 7). In this way, they acquire critical consciousness through the support and the crucial feedback gained in a social context of a community of learners. The nature of these social interactions is central to what Vygotsky's (1978) referred to as one's zone of proximal development. For the preservice social studies teachers to develop and grow in understanding of critical literacy, they need to have a social context to push them forward for social change. The social studies field experience is one very important social context in their preparation.

Ultimately, it is necessary for preservice students to learn how to translate their increased awareness of critical literacies into teaching behaviors that meet the needs of a diverse student population. This translation of critical literacy knowledge into practice eventually provides preservice teachers with the necessary skills to seek diverse perspectives and recognize cultural bias in their own planning and instruction (Wooldridge, 2001). Therefore, the purpose for this research project is to examine how preservice teachers attempt to make sense of critical literacy.

## Chapter 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods of inquiry were used to best address the research question: Given both field experience and a social studies method course, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching? This chapter contains outlines design of the study, research setting, choosing the participants, data collection, timeline, data analysis, researcher's role and subjectivity, establishing trustworthiness, generalizability, and ethics.

#### Design of the Research Study

The research project was a qualitative case study. This methodology was reflective and oriented toward change (Zeichner, 1995) and is similar to teacher research approaches (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hubbard & Power, 2002). My intent was to carefully examine the experiences of preservice teachers' and examine their transformative practices and commitments that guided them in their teaching. Case study researchers seek both what is common and what is particular about the case (Stake, 2000). The major conceptual responsibilities of this qualitative research aligns with Stake in that it attempted to: 1) bound the case by conceptualizing the object of study; 2)

select the themes or issues; 3) seek patterns of data to develop the issues; 4) triangulate key observations and bases for interpretations; 5) select alternative interpretations to pursue; and 6) develop assertions about the case (p 448).

### College Teacher-Research

In this study, I was the university teacher as well as the researcher in this study. Therefore, my methodological approach naturally provided opportunities for me to understand more about my teaching in order to better understand how to prepare preservice teachers to teach children to use critical literacy approaches. Hubbard and Power (2002) provide two principles that define teacher research in a variety of education context. First, teacher research is based upon close observation of students' work. Secondly, teacher-researchers depend upon a research community. Both principles support my teacher research approach since I was observing the work of preservice teachers at various middle schools in their field experience at The Ohio State University.

### Research Setting

The Ohio State University, a public land grant university, was the site for the study. This institution used a concurrent social studies field experience model for providing undergraduate preservice middle teachers with field experience in social studies education prior to admission to the Master of Education teacher licensure program. The concurrent model means preservice elementary/middle teachers had a field experience requirement in social studies education during their enrollment in an elementary/middle social studies methods course. The participants in the study spent

between 36-40 hours in middle grade social studies classrooms ranging from grades 6-8. At the same time, they also spent 30 hours in the methods course that addressed social studies curriculum and instruction in grades 4-9. In this model, the field experience is a course requirement for completing the middle childhood social studies methods course and is considered an integral part of the course. In this model, preservice middle teachers practiced teaching social studies lessons in the methods course and then in the field placement in the middle school classrooms. Further, the field experience is different from traditional social studies field experiences in that we attempted to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to observe critical literacy in the social studies lessons in the classrooms as well as attempt to implement critical literacy strategies in the lessons that they taught.

Although the course addressed middle school social studies in grades 4-9, I deliberately placed all of the preservice teachers in grades 6-8 middle schools. Owens (1997) who conducts research studies on elementary social studies methods and field experiences addresses an important reality:

Since social studies does not usually have the same priority as reading, language arts, and math, it would be interesting to know if directing (cooperating) teachers teach social studies more often or for greater lengths of time when they have preservice teachers in their classrooms or whether preservice teachers just have to visit elementary classrooms more often to fulfill the time requirement (p. 36).

For the purpose of this study, I wanted to avoid the dilemma that Owens addresses. In middle schools, social studies education is structured in the regular school day.



### My Role as the Instructor and Supervisor

In understanding the research it is important to understand the dual role of the researcher as the course instructor/supervisor. I was the primary instructor and supervisor in the Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Middle Childhood Program at The Ohio State University. Along with my regular once a week regular teaching and supervision responsibilities, I communicated with middle school staff, attempting to make valuable connections between the university method course content and practices and school personnel.

Because Ohio State University preservice social studies teachers spent approximately 36-40 hours in the same school, they tended to become familiar with and within their school communities. My scheduled observations of preservice teachers' practice became an opportunity for an ongoing conversation about their school and practice. I also spent time facilitating communication between the university and the schools and met with all staff. This was done to create a visible presence so that building teachers would feel comfortable with my presence as both researcher and as the students' university supervisor.

### Participants

Eleven preservice teachers from various levels (sophomore through senior) expressed interest in participating in the study. This was the total enrollment in the methods course. Of the total willing participants, 18% (n = 2) were seniors, 45% (n = 5) were juniors, 36% (n = 4) were sophomores. In relation to age, 100% were between the ages of 19-22. Eighty-one percent (n = 9) of the participants were female. In relation to

race, 91% (n = 10) were White, while one female participant was Korean American. Most of the preservice teachers were representative of the larger teacher education population as they were predominately white, middle-class females who attended suburban and rural schools mostly in Ohio. Because we placed preservice teachers in primarily urban settings, this meant that most of the preservice teachers were placed in schools very different, in terms of demographics, than the school they attended (Zeichner, 1996).

### Selection of Participants

Although there were eleven participants in the class, three participants who demonstrated skills and dispositions in being critically literate in their teaching were selected as participants for the research study. Purposeful sampling would best describe the sampling of the participants in this study. Each case was selected based on its information-richness from which I could learn a great deal about issues central to the purpose of the research (Patton, 2002).

There were three major criteria characteristics when selecting the participants. First, the selected participants needed *to demonstrate some understanding of definitions of critical literacy* teaching in the beginning of the course. During the second day of class, each willing participant had to write their definition of critical literacy. From these writing samples, these preservice teachers showed at least a minimal understanding and definition of critical literacy. Second, the selected participants needed to *demonstrate a commitment* towards critical literacy in their field placement. I determined their commitment based on their in-class written reflections and classroom conversations.

During classroom conversations, all three participants defended critical literacy in the social studies as well as provided a rationale for critical literacy in their lesson plans and written reflections. Third, early in the course, the participants needed to successfully *demonstrate their skill* to teach for critical literacy in a social studies lesson. Early in the methods course, I observed all students in the course teach a social studies lesson. Based on three criteria characteristics mentioned above, I selected three participants who met all of these criteria.

Thus the research undertaken is a case study of three female students: two White and one Korean American. The two White students are Stacie, a sophomore, and Brittney, a senior. The Korean American student is Heather, a junior. Three participants can be seen as developing critically literate teachers. It is important to note that I was deliberate in selecting these three students for the study. When one looks at the literature on critical literacy and other methods-and the overwhelming number of studies that focus on what preservice teachers are unable to do-it was important to provide a counter story, a story of hope for critical literacy in social studies education. I chose to look at what preservice teachers *can* do, however feeble their attempts. So selecting those who were *able* and committed through their actions to engage critical literacy was the group I chose to study. This may tell us what is possible for preservice teachers.

#### Data Collection: Methodology

This case study provided a detail way to the involvement in a methods and field experience course from both the perspectives of the preservice teacher participants and the university instructor. I examined preservice teacher participants' reasons for their

emergent pedagogical choices, the impact and influence that participation in the course played in learning to teach social studies from a critical perspective and the role a teacher educator plays in the facilitation of such learning. I used a grounded survey after analyzing data collected from multiple source-observations, conversations, formal interviews, etc (Charmaz, 2000). The purpose of the survey was to confirm or disconfirm some initial assertions made from the data collection (Erickson, 1986).

#### Timeline of the Study

- End of September, 2005 – Provided a verbal and written summary of the study and consent forms to the eleven preservice teachers enrolled in the course.
- October, 2005 – Classroom sessions were taught that connected critical literacy to the social studies in the university social studies methods course. I observed preservice teachers teach a lesson demonstration in the method course. One focus group interview was conducted.
- Late October, 2005 - Selected three preservice teachers to focus this study for in-depth analysis.
- November, 2005 – Observed each preservice teacher teach 1-2 social studies lessons in their assigned field experience. In addition, one focus group interview was conducted.
- Early December, 2005 – Conducted individual interviews with each. Collected their curriculum portfolios.
- Mid December, 2005 to late March, 2006 – Analyzed data.
- Late March, 2006 to end of June, 2006 – Presented data and wrote dissertation.

### Data Collection: Sources

This study provides a detailed account of the ways in which critical literacy and social studies are connected in an introductory social studies field experience course from both the perspectives of the preservice students and the researcher. Through observations, curriculum documents, and interviews, I examined their questions, practices, opinions, and growth in using critical literacy as a way to improve social studies teaching. From the eleven preservice teachers in the course, three preservice teachers were selected in the study.

### Preservice Teacher Observation

In the month of October 2005, I observed the participants teach one social studies lesson in the methods course. The lesson taught in the methods courses had to incorporate the assigned readings for that day. In the month of November, I observed the preservice teacher participants teach at least one social studies lesson in their assigned field experience. Throughout the entire course in the Autumn quarter, I took observation notes as preservice teachers were engaged in conversations and activities around critical literacy in the methods course. I collected detailed field notes at all these observations.

### Curriculum Portfolio

In the first week of December, 2005 I collected the curriculum portfolio from the three preservice teacher participants for analysis. The portfolio consists of field experience observation logs, student written lesson plans, self evaluations of lessons, and written reflections (See Appendices A and B).

The curriculum portfolio can be thought of as document collection from the three selected preservice teacher participants. These documents were used as data within this study. I draw on several other sources for additional curriculum data.

#### Reflection Exit Cards

Each week, students were asked to hand in a written reflection about the class session of the methods course. They were asked to reflect on the work done in the methods course (e.g. record an insight you had, something you learned, something that caught your interest). These data were used in the study.

#### Field Logs

In their field experience, preservice students were asked to write up classroom observations. In those lessons, they examined the literacy practices in the classroom. Each week, they submitted a copy of their field logs. At least two logs from two different social studies lessons observed were submitted each week.

#### Lesson Plans and Self-Evaluation

Preservice teacher participants designed social studies lesson plans, implemented them for a small group of children or class, and completed an extended self-evaluation one week after each lesson. The self-evaluation asked the following questions:

1. How effective was the preparation process with your mentor teacher (division of material, consensus/ initial disagreement?)
2. Did you present all information clearly?
3. What were the variables that contributed to the students effective/ineffective work?
4. Were your objectives clear in your leadership?

5. Were your transitions smooth?
6. Did you ask appropriate and open-ended questions?
7. What were some of the emotions you experienced as a leader during the session and what generated them (discuss both positive and negative feelings)
8. How was your social studies lesson linked to literacy in theory, practice and/or pedagogy?
9. What did you learn from the activity and what would you do differently if you could do it again with the same type of group?

#### Literacy and Social Studies Reflection Paper

In a five-page reflection paper, preservice teachers reflected on their own progress, incorporating field experience and previous reflections, the readings, and other learning experiences they had during the class regarding literacy connections in the social studies. The main questions/guidelines for the reflection paper were:

1. What have you learned in the field experience and class?
2. Have your attitudes about literacy in social studies been changed or reinforced? How?
3. Do you intend to incorporate critical literacy and balanced literacy in you own social studies teachings? Why? How?

#### Focus Group and Individual Interviews

I facilitated two focus group interviews, one in October, 2005 and one in November, 2005. Both focus group interviews involved the three participants and took place after regular class sessions. In the first week of December, 2005 I conducted

individual interviews with the three preservice teacher participants. Individual interviews were conducted after the three preservice teachers completed their portfolio conference/grading to avoid a conflict of interest or the feeling of pressure to perform. The format for the individual and focus group conversations were open-ended. Typical questions/topics included the following:

1. Tell me what you know about critical literacy thus far?
2. Tell me the ways in which critical literacy can be connected to the social studies?
3. Do you remember an occasion when critical literacy skills were involved in your own social studies learning experience? Tell me about your social studies class.
4. How are your classroom observations done for class helping you to think about connections between critical literacy and social studies learning? Give an example of this.
5. Could you tell me what influenced your decision making when designing your lesson plans in the field experience?
6. When planning your social studies lesson, could you give a more detailed description of what happened in your planning?
7. What do you think contributed to your students' understanding in the lessons you taught?
8. How were your social studies lessons linked to critical literacy in theory, practice and/or pedagogy?
9. What did you learn from connecting critical literacy to your social studies instruction?



10. What would you do differently if you could teach the same group of students again?

11. What would you do differently if you could teach a different group of students?

With the permission of the participants, these interviews were audio taped. Participants were informed that they were free to stop the recorder at any time. The recorder was placed on the center of the table for visibility. Transcriptions of these interviews provided data for in-depth review, follow-up, and analysis.

#### Focus Group Interview #1

The first focus group interview took place in mid-October. During this time, the preservice teacher participants were learning about critical literacy in the social studies and starting to make observations in their field experience classroom. The primary purpose of this discussion was to define critical literacy and explore how they see critical literacy in their field experiences or not. All three selected participants spoke in the interview and the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

#### Focus Group Interview #2

The second focus group interview took place in mid-November. By this time, all three preservice teacher participants had taught one or two social studies lessons in their field experience. During this focus group, the preservice teachers were more focused on the outside factors that determined the outcome of their lesson(s) development design. The primary purpose of this discussion was to look at preservice teachers' perception of their methods course in relation to their lesson planning in the field experience. Again, all three selected participants spoke in the interview and the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

### Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were also conducted with the three preservice teacher participants. Individual interviews were held in early December. The purpose was to learn more about the preservice teacher participants' backgrounds, clarify their definition of critical literacy in the social studies and discuss how they went about lesson planning and implementation in their field experience. Also, the individual interview focused on how they would teach the lesson differently if they were not under the guidance of a mentor teacher.

### Researcher Journal Entries

Throughout the project, I kept a researcher journal on my thoughts, feelings, observations, and theoretical notes. Also, in my research journal were my lesson plans and post-session notes including thoughts about my changing understanding of how the preservice teachers were influenced in their ability to teach for critical literacy.

### Analysis of Data

Consistent with the naturalist inquiry framework in qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1985), I inductively approached data analysis. It was my intention as a researcher to seek concepts and interpret emergent themes rather than applying a particular interpretive framework from the onset (Glasser & Straus, 1967; Charmaz, 2000; Patton, 2002). I was especially interested in the critical literacy approaches that preservice teacher participants attempted to teach in their field experience when given the opportunity and freedom to do so. Therefore, this case study is a primary vehicle for

emic inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). No single item of data was given serious consideration unless it could be triangulated (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Analyzing this triangulated data (classroom observations, focus group/individual interviews, and curriculum development) through the lens of critical and qualitative research paradigms and theory generated a form of analysis aligned with qualitative research.

Specifically, I coded the data and developed a grounded theory of raising critical consciousness while learning about critical literacy teaching in the field experience.

First, I examined the critical literacy approaches that I observed in the preservice teacher participants teaching. I looked for themes in the three preservice teacher participants' teaching, curriculum development, and interviews. Although my initial examination was concrete and descriptive (critical literacy approaches occurring in the classroom), I later developed deeper analytical questions from studying the initial data (Charmaz, 2000). With this lens, I used Leland and Harste's (2005) three components of taking critical perspectives to: 1) understand systems of meaning; 2) interrogate personal involvement; and 3) examine taking social action (pp. 67-68).

One major task when analyzing the three preservice teacher participants was to make assertions from the data corpus that is from the grounded survey, classroom observation, interview notes, and curriculum documents. In addition, I provided warrants for all the assertions I made. This was done by reviewing the data corpus repeatedly to test the validity of the assertions that were generated, and seeking disconfirming evidence as well as confirming evidence (Erickson, 1986).

An interpretive commentary including general and particular descriptions is represented in the data analysis (Erickson, 1986). In order for the reader to interpret my assertions, the cases of three preservice teacher participants were reported in detail.

### Researcher's Role

The primary goal of this study was to examine the question: how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching? To maintain this focus, I deliberately needed to reflect and critically examine my research practices throughout the study and constantly assess my involvement (Glesne, 1999). While I acknowledge that neutrality can never completely exist because of the inevitable evaluative role that I play as the instructor of the course and as a human being with my own subjectivities, I provided opportunities to equalize and alleviate the power differential by ethically balancing the relationship between the participants and myself as research, carefully separating my role as a researcher from that as their instructor. In my initial solicitation, I made it clear that participants' names would be confidential and they had the right to withdraw from the dissertation study at any time and that doing so would in no way impact their regular class evaluation. Lesson observations and the curriculum portfolio development were a part of the regular course. Focus group and individual interviews were conducted outside of regular class time.

## Establishing Trustworthiness

### Internal Validity

Qualitative research uses several techniques to address threats of internal validity (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). In any research design, there was always possibility that the relationships shown in the data are, in fact, due to something else (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). In this qualitative research study, I addressed threats to internal validity by engaging in expert and peer consultation/debriefing, member checks, and by triangulating my data analysis. Working from a postpositivist framework, it was not my goal to search for proofs, but to demonstrate plausibility (Charmaz, 2000). This research attempts to demonstrate the plausibility of preservice teacher participants being able to develop into critically literate social studies teachers.

### Expert and Peer Consultation/Debriefing

I was invited to join a writing seminar that met weekly and allowed me to reflect on the nature and process of research, its ontology, epistemology, methodology and representations. My involvement in this group provided me with expert and peer consultation to further question or validate my interpretations, thus leading to greater validity within the study.

### Member check

The member check was one of the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility, whereby data, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions are shared with members from whom the data were originally collected (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). To insure trustworthiness, I provided clear and accurate documentation of the process of data collection and an analysis that includes a description of the analytic

categories used to interpret the data. After both focus groups, I met with each participant to share my interpretations. Also, it was essential that I shared drafts of my interpretations with the preservice teacher participants (Glesne, 1999). The preservice teachers in the study were encouraged to provide feedback on my analysis. My interpretations were shared by asking clarification questions through survey and email communication. In addition, a follow up phone conversation with each participant about my interpretations was undertaken. This feedback acted as another lens toward interpretation.

### Triangulation

My report of the study includes systematic field notes and representative samples of triangulated data (thick description from classroom observations, focus group interviews, and curriculum development) that supported or disconfirmed my interpretations. Using these data helped provide the thick description that was necessary for judgments of transferability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Keep in mind that a thick description does not simply make something valid. Erickson (1986) reminds us:

It is the combination of richness and interpretive perspective that makes the account valid. Such a valid account is not simply a description; it is an analysis.

Within the details of the story, selected carefully, is contained a statement of a theory of organization and meaning of the events described (p. 150).

While providing rich detail and context for my interpretations, the thick descriptions also delineate the limitations of the data (Geertz, 1973).

### Generalizability/Transferability

An overview description of the methods and field experience course provided at the end of chapter three contributes to the validity of the study. However, making comparisons and cross generalizations are still often problematic (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). Although multiple variables exist that would alter the interpretations of the study, certain aspects of the methods and field experience course format could be utilized with preservice teachers to support critical teaching practice in any number of teacher education settings.

Given that there are numerous social studies methods courses with a teacher education field experience component, I believe this study will be useful to other teacher education programs. Most academic researchers are supportive of case studies only if there is clear expectation of generalizability to other cases (Stake, 2000).

Case studies also call for examination of complexity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In addition to careful examination of the multiple layers of meanings of critical literacy for these teachers, I have suggested those complexities as possibilities for further investigation. In my movement through what happened with three participants and what generally happens for preservice teachers learning to teach social studies from a critically literate perspective, I am ultimately guided by a vision that this can be achieved in a variety of ways, demonstrated by the very structure of the course and the careful reflective processes used with the preservice teacher participants. Given the complexity of the three participants' lives and through their individual case studies, the reasonableness of generalizability will depend on the reader finding in the thick

description substantial similarities between his or her own contextual understanding and this study. Through the systematic data collection, analysis, and presentation, certain aspects of this research may be utilized with preservice teachers in other contexts to support reflective practice.

### Ethics

All preservice teachers enrolled in the social studies methods course were willing to be a part of the study and signed the permission slips required for the Internal Review Board. As stated earlier, before each interview, I explained that the participants could choose to only answer questions that they were comfortable answering. I explained that at any point, they could withdraw from the study. All participants agreed to the audio tape recordings. The recording equipment was placed in the center of the table so all participants could see it.

In the process of analysis and interpretation, I was aware of my own expectations versus what really may have happened in the context of the methods and field experience course. Preconceived expectations, on the part of the teacher educator, can become deeply embedded in the motivations of the study that they appear to be the actual outcomes. To fight this, I worked to provide disconfirming evidence to avoid my own self-fulfilling prophecies.



## Overview of Method Course Sessions

To have a sense of the topics, readings, and activities in the method course, an overview is provided below.

### SESSION ONE

Topic: Problems in social studies education

Reading:

Barton, K.C., & Levstik, L. S. (2003). Why don't more history teachers engage students in interpretation? *Social Education*, 67(6), 358-361.

Activities in Methods Course:

In class, we shared our own personal experiences as social studies learners. Following, some of the discussion questions included: Why do you think content coverage is so important for most teachers? Describe an outstanding social studies learning experience and/or teacher? Preservice teacher completed the following writing prompt: What do you know or think you know about critical literacy?

### SESSION TWO

Topic: Critical literacy in the social studies; social studies in the middle grades

Readings:

Comber, B. (2001). Critical literacy: What is it, and what does it look like in elementary classrooms? *National Council of Teachers of English*, 6(3), 1-6.

Chapin, J. R., & Messick, R. G. (2002). Chapter 6 Social studies in the fourth through eighth grades. *Elementary social studies: A practical guide*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Wolk, S. (2003). Teaching for critical literacy in social studies. *The Social Studies* (May/June), 101-106.

Activities in Methods Course:

I provided an overview lecture on critical literacy and critical literacy in the social studies. I then discussed using current events in the classroom and led a discussion about life after Hurricane Katrina. I had asked how did supportive structures develop in the homeless group in New Orleans? To what extent were they supportive? What services were available for the homeless? How effective were they? How do Hollywood and the media portray homeless people and their situations?

I led the discussion by studying drama with Eve Bunting's children's book *Fly Away Home*. This particular drama lesson did not directly go into the issue in New Orleans; it prepared students to think about poverty and the hidden prejudices/oppression that come with it. In this lesson, students were to gain a better understanding of poverty by examining how a boy and his father survive on little income.

Afterwards, I shared the results of session one's writing prompt: What do you know or think you know about critical literacy with students?

### SESSION THREE

Topics: Missing perspective and voices in the social studies textbooks, and

The biography is the private experience in life while the history refers to the social structures and process (constructing critical literacies).

Readings:

Hess, D. E. (2004). Discussion in social studies: Is it worth the trouble? *Social Education*, 68(2), 151-155.

Beck, I.L. & McKeown, M.G. (2002). Questioning the author: Making sense of social studies. *Educational Leadership* 60(3), 44-47.

White, J. J. (1988). Searching for substantial knowledge in social studies. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 16(2), 115-140.

Hart, D. (2002). Chapter 29 World War II. *History alive! The United States*. Palo Alto, CA: Teachers' Curriculum Institute.

Activities in Methods Course:

The students had read *Searching for substantial knowledge in social studies* by J.J. White. The essential question in the article was how do textbooks pretend to be objective? In this reading, White claims that social studies texts have a point of view and cannot be objective and texts have only one point of view but need multiple points of view.

We conducted a social studies textbook analysis on how the Holocaust is represented. The main objective was to critique who was represented in the text and who was not.

I wrote from the White article, “Children need to acquire the story of our past from an ever increasing cast of characters.” We had a discussion and then participated in a role-play activity about the Holocaust that supported White’s statement.

## SESSION FOUR

Topic: Building conceptual knowledge

Readings:

Irvin, J.L. (1995) Enhancing Literacy Strategies in Social Studies, Washington DC:

National Council for the Social Studies – Chapters 1 and 2

Activity in Methods Course:

A second reading by Lankshear and Knobel was done in-class and explored how certain constructions of reality can be created by text. Included was a brief article asking for aid for the starving people in Africa. After reading this article, preservice teachers were asked to explore the following questions (p. 112):

What version of events/reality is foregrounded here?

Whose version is this? From whose perspective is it constructed?

What other (possible) versions are excluded?

Whose/what interests are served by this representation?

By what means-lexical, syntactic, etc.-does this text construct (its) reality?

How does this position the reader?

Britney and Kerri facilitated a discussion on the assigned readings and then conducted a drama activity. The activity asked the class to create stories of three Titanic passengers (the names were real names of passengers) following with checking our stories with “FACTUAL” biographies that were found on the internet. The activity involved members from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and staff. The creative narratives and survival in the narratives were associated with class status.

## SESSION FIVE

Topic: Reading and writing for critical thinking in the social studies

Readings:

Giroux, H. (1988). Chapter 5 Writing in the social studies. *Teachers as intellectuals: Towards a critical pedagogy of learning*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey.

Morris, R., & Hickey, G. (2003). Writing plays for the middle school social studies classroom: A seventh grade case study. *The International Journal of Social Education*, 18, 52-58.

Irvin, J.L. (1995) Enhancing Literacy Strategies in Social Studies, Washington DC: National Council for the Social Studies – Chapter 3

Activities in Methods Course:

Heather facilitated a discussion on the assigned readings and then conducted a class activity. Heather taught a lesson in the methods course where she brought in three different readings/perspectives on the dropping of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. The three perspectives were a sixth Japanese student whose family was killed, a writer for a local newspaper, and a Chief of Staff to Roosevelt and Truman. In teaching the lesson, the class was divided into three groups with each group taking one perspective. After reading the text on their assigned perspective, each group had to respond to questions that included:

Who is the communicator of the author?

What audience is the target of the message?

Was the message factual in style, emotive, biased?

How justifiable is the purpose of the communication, according to an evaluation in terms of the reader's values?

Was it persuasive?

After each group did the reading and question responses, Heather asked each group to discuss the perspective they were assigned. Afterward, Heather had the students participate in an informal debate about whether the United States should have dropped the bomb or not. The class was divided again into two groups – one group supporting and not supporting the decision to drop the atomic bomb. Heather moderated the discussion.

I had asked students, "What is critical literacy?" Reflecting from their observation logs that they conducted, they were asked if they saw critical literacy in their field placement or not.

## SESSION SIX

Topic: Children's literature and drama in the social studies

Readings:

Wollman-Bonilla, J. E. (1998). Outrageous viewpoints: Teachers' criteria for rejecting works of children's literature. *Language Arts*, 75(4).

Smith, J. L., & Herring, J. D. (2001). Literature and drama: Experiencing social studies. *Dramatic Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Irvin, J.L. (1995) Enhancing Literacy Strategies in Social Studies, Washington DC:

National Council for the Social Studies – Chapter 4

McLaughlin, M., & DeVoogd, G. (2004). Critical literacy as comprehension: Expanding reading response. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48(1), 52-62.

Activities in Methods Course:

Barb, Erica, and Lisa facilitated a discussion on the assigned readings and then conducted a class activity. The first activity required each person to read a different character in Paul Fleischman's *Bull Run*. Each person was asked to read a biography from the story. The class was split into two groups. Each group was asked to create or come up with a theatrical skit that involved all of the characters.

Erica gave a book talk on Eve Bunting's *Smoky Nights* and asked if teachers should teach it or not. The story is about the riots in Los Angeles in 1992. Erica had read parts of the story to the class. Erica had stressed that, "You can't just read *Smoky Nights* and leave it. Instead, you would also want to explore why the riot happened." The class had a discussion about using controversial books in the classroom. Later, I facilitated a discussion and summary around the McLaughlin and DeVoogd article and conducted a drama/children's literature activity.

## SESSION SEVEN

Topic: Collecting oral histories and stories

Readings:

Kelin, D.A. (2005) *To Feel as Our Ancestors Did: Collecting and Performing Oral Histories*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann – Chapters 1-3

#### Activities in Methods Course:

Stacie facilitated a discussion on the assigned readings and then conducted a class activity. This activity was focused on collecting and performing an oral story from a Japanese woman named Gumi. After reading Gumi's biography, Stacie asked the class, "What should the interview focus on?" After some brainstorming, the class decided to focus the interview on how Gumi's father's military affected her learning experiences in school. When the topic was established, Stacie conducted some interview skill building exercises before developing actual questions. Some of the questions in the interview included:

Can you talk about the father's view on the military in Japan and World War II?

Did your school and father ever conflict? Can you share an episode?

What are the teacher's views about the military and can you discuss their opinions?

In Gumi's oral telling, she described her life as a student in Japan. A major conflict was that her father supported the military meanwhile her teachers were anti-military and had purposefully left nationalism out of the curriculum. Gumi told the class that teachers were somewhat prejudice of her because of her father. She went on to say, "In the fifth grade, one of my teacher's was leaving the school permanently. The teacher had written a goodbye letter for everyone but me. The teacher specifically told me it was because my father was in the military. I was so upset. I would often learn more about my father's views over the dinner table." In the next activity, students were divided into two groups and asked to create a performance focused on this conflict. Both groups had listened to



the same oral telling of the event and then created and performed that event into four scenes.

## SESSION EIGHT

Topic: Interpreting and performing oral stories; reflection

Reading:

Kelin, D.A. (2005) To Feel as Our Ancestors Did: Collecting and Performing Oral Histories. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann – Chapters 4 and 5

Activities in Methods Course:

Using drama skills such as tableaux and improvisation, two different groups created a performance based on Gumi's telling. Afterwards, the groups shared their performance with each other. A reflective discussion occurred afterwards addressing the similarities and differences of the two performances.

A discussion took place on how well the preservice teachers could prepare for their lessons. Many of them have taught lessons already. Discussion question: Could you tell me what influenced your decision-making when designing your lesson plans in the field experience?

## SESSION NINE

Topics: Diversity and equity issues in education

Activities in Methods Course:

Guest speaker, Terry Hubbard gave a power point presentation on diversity and equity issues in education.

## SESSION TEN

Topic: Sharing stories about our field experience setting, lesson plans, and actual teaching practices

Readings:

None

Activities in Methods Course:

Preservice teachers were asked to distribute one or two of their lesson plans and explain it to the methods class. They were asked to be prepared to discuss their experience in teaching the lesson and defend their choices with sound ethical and pedagogical justifications. Each presentation was about the lesson sessions they conducted at their field experience school.

## SESSION ELEVEN: FINALS WEEK

Preservice teachers were asked to construct a final portfolio. Some of the requirements throughout the academic quarter were required as part of the final portfolio. The descriptions of the assignments are listed in Appendix B.

### Summary

This research is a qualitative case study which carefully considers both field experience and a social studies method course when examining how preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their

teaching. The use of the methods described in this chapter, including observations of preservice teachers, interviews with individual preservice teacher participants, focus group interviews, the collection of curriculum development materials, member checks of data, and examines the relationship between preservice teacher education and the ability to apply critical literacy within their social studies curriculum and practices.

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis

In chapter four, a description of the three cases will be provided. Following that, I will examine the participants' emergent pedagogical choices and explore the meanings behind their choices. I will examine the three cases using Ball's (2000) and Leland and Harste (2005) theoretical frameworks. Finally I will theorize through the data, examining preservice teachers' critical consciousness development as a way towards critical literacy possibilities.

#### Background Experience of Participants

In this study, preservice teacher participants shared their background, cultural experiences, and their literacy experiences in the social studies classroom. Similar to Ball's (2000) work, I wanted to bring to conscious awareness of various experiences that influenced the development of their views issues around literacy, especially teaching diverse students. While the selected participants' social class status, learning experiences, and future aspirations were somewhat similar to one another, their field experience was the place that connected their biographies and influenced their feelings about how they would teach for critical literacy. The following are brief autobiographical sketches of the

three participants, including their reflections of past experiences with social studies education.

### Britney

Britney, a Caucasian, 22 year-old college senior grew up in a suburban community in Ohio, where the majority of people living in her neighborhood and school were white. She mentioned:

I think, out of the 8 years in elementary and middle school, there was one black student. At high school graduation, there were about a dozen people of color. My school was mostly middle to upper class.

Britney attended a Catholic school that supported what she called, "a traditional style of learning." By traditional style of learning, particularly related to social studies, she meant teacher centered, lecture orientated, and textbook centered. Britney described one of her former high school teachers who attempted to engage the students in the transmission of facts and ideas. She also commented on the personality traits of her former high school teacher:

As a junior and senior in high school, I had the same teacher for U.S. History and U.S. Government. He usually stood up at the front of the room and would lecture while writing notes on the board. But, he would make jokes all throughout class about the material we were covering or a way a student was behaving. He was very personable with each student. We would have group activities every week.

He was very lively and interactive with the students.

Britney's account describes the importance of social studies teachers' sense of humor and having students interact with each other on a regular basis.

Britney struggled when I asked her about the kind of school district she would like to work in. She partly wanted to go back to the Catholic school and partly desired to help students in urban schools. When talking about a previous and different field experience in her college program, she recognized her privilege:

In another school that I worked in, it was a majority black population with less money and resources. The building was a little run down. I think the lack of income doesn't give the opportunities for students to learn. My school was much better. We were middle class and there were more resources. Students have the opportunities. They have computers.

Britney also discussed her feelings and thoughts of being in a predominately poor, African American school for the first time:

When I first went in there, it was awkward. The host teacher was white, but the kids were black. I felt uneasy. Once we got to know each other it was better. I didn't feel that different after awhile.

Britney acknowledges her uneasiness but immediately discovers the value of getting to know her students.

### Stacie

Stacie is Caucasian and a 20 year-old college sophomore. Stacie described her hometown in Ohio as industrial, middle-class, and small. The majority of students in her hometown were white with some Asians and African Americans. Stacie intends to return to her hometown:

My goal is to go home and teach in my middle school. I like home. I'm used to being home. My parents are teachers there. My brother is there as well. I have a lot of connections for a job.

Although Stacie described her hometown school as "traditional", she often wanted to highlight the effective experiences she had in her hometown school. In particular, she appreciated the teachers who were creative in their ability to transmit certain knowledge:

Most of my teachers just lectured. However, while interning at my local middle school, the teacher there had students act out the process of being knighted to help them understand how important it was and how society was organized. She also used poems and songs to help the students remember important facts. The teacher thrived on finding new and exciting ways to get the students to relate with what they were learning.

Stacie's definition of a good social studies teacher was having the ability to creatively transmit information and ideas to the students. In observing Stacie's teaching practice in this study, it is interesting to note that she included act-outs to engage sixth graders in critical thought.

Although Stacie admitted that most of her teachers lectured, she would often refer to a particular seventh grade learning experience she had:

When I was in seventh grade, we were in the middle of studying the Holocaust. We came in that day and teachers had certain students picked out...All of sudden some students were getting discriminated against that day. I was one of the students that had to sit in the back of the room. The teacher would hand out candy to everybody except for those assigned to sit in the back of the room.

During the day, we could not answer questions...We were discriminated in all of our classes. At the end of the day, the high school counselors came in. We all broke up, those discriminated against were in rooms while those not discriminated were in other rooms. We talked about all the things that happened and how it made us feel. Finally, the counselors merged all of the groups together and we had a big discussion, sharing what each group talked about. That was really neat. That really put you in that place. You wouldn't think how much that it would affect you but it really did. Because you know what's going on and you know it's just an experiment but still really impacts you and it got everyone thinking about how it was.

This learning experience on discrimination pushed Stacie to believe that inequities and white privilege should be addressed in all schools. However, she downplayed the issue on teaching white privilege in her hometown. She explained:

White privilege exists a little bit, but I think it's getting better. All kids need to know about and understand white privilege. But it depends on where you are located. In my hometown, it would not be such an issue; however, it would be good to hear. My teachers in middle school touched on discrimination. Not just white, but discrimination. It's important for all to know about and that injustice is still going on.

I was interested to know if Stacie's whiteness had ever caused her to feel any racial tension between herself and a person (people) of color. She described one of her first cross-cultural experience in New York City, 2004. Stacie was involved in an education group that traveled to a school in the Bronx. The purpose was to simply observe the



students and teachers in the school. She admitted whiteness influenced how she felt in a school with mostly Hispanic and African American students. The leaders of the education program told Stacie, "be careful." As an immediate result, she expected to feel uncomfortable. Stacie stated:

There were bars on the windows, and the kids came up and made teasing comments. A little tension was there...We stayed in our little white group.

Stacie felt that the expectation was to feel uncomfortable before entering the school.

When looking back, she strongly felt that the leaders of the education group should have provided more initial positive thoughts about the Bronx school.

### Heather

Heather, a 21 year-old junior, who is Korean-American grew up in a predominately white, middle class suburban neighborhood in Ohio. Based on Heather's experiences, she had limited positive experiences. She advocates group work:

My history teacher lectured a lot, but he had a good sense of humor, which made the class more interesting. Working in groups also made the class enjoyable.

Working with classmates and sharing ideas made me work better. This was probably the ONLY positive social studies experience I've had!

For Heather's social studies field placement, she worked in an upper class school district:

The school that I worked in is pretty much exactly the same. However, this school is more upper class where the dad works and the mom stays home...I loved the school district that I was at. I even went extra days. I would like to teach there after I graduate.

Both of Heather's parents were born and raised in South Korea. She wondered if her parents' social class status provided her some advantage:

Being middle class, maybe I have a privilege there. My parents were there for me and I don't have to pay for any student loans.

From race and ethnicity perspectives, Heather acknowledged some of her thoughts about being Asian descent in middle level education:

I encountered a lot of ethnicities recently. I did a mentoring program for African Americans. I did tutoring for other Asian students. I'm more aware of my race in education as I get older. I'm trying to be in the education field, and I'm wondering what everyone is thinking of me. I'm sure that most of these students and other teachers have not seen many Asian middle school teachers.

After Heather made these comments, I asked her if she thought that being a woman of color would somehow benefit her own students of color. Overall, she was a bit speechless and sounded unsure, "maybe...ahh...I guess I could give a different perspective?" I sensed she was uncomfortable with answering the question. Heather knows she wants to be active in a diverse community, but it appeared that maybe she needs to think more critically on the impact she could make. *Who* does she want to teach? Heather wants to work in a diverse school that is middle to upper class. Her dream goals as a future teacher might reflect both her social class and ethnicity.

### Differences and Commonalities of the Participants

Britney, Stacie, and Heather grew up in middle class environments and reflected on how that contributes to their own privilege. All three participants are strongly considering teaching in a similar school setting they grew up in. Only Britney gave some consideration in working in a low-income urban school.

All participants had criticisms, but were able to share and celebrate a positive social studies experience to some extent. However, the positive experience was limited to the "charming" personalities of their teachers and the chance to work in groups. Their positive experiences were described as the teacher's ability to make claimed facts "come alive" in the classroom rather than other possibilities such as provoking critical thinking or problem posing.

All participants reflected on their biographies of literacy in social studies learning that influenced their own literacy attitudes and allowed them to question some of their own perspectives that they may have not been previously aware of. For example, Heather writes:

I was taught social studies with lectures, worksheets, and chapter tests, and I found that this was not the best way to learn. These 'learning' activities did not incorporate literacy at all. These things can be helpful during the right situations in class, but it is not an ideal way for students to learn and think critically about social studies. Lectures and worksheets primarily do not allow students to think for themselves because the teacher and the book do it for them.

Stacie states:

Before ever coming into this class I had a belief that students should be engaged in what they were learning. I think this came from my previous experiences in school as a learner and as a teacher. What I learned from this class is how to engage the students and that it is not just engaging them but getting students to explore and to look for their own understanding of social studies. This is where critical literacy comes into play. Before this experience I had never heard of critical literacy and in my first reflection card wrote that I thought it was, “the minimal literacy required in order to be able to comprehend new ideas.” As I soon found out critical literacy was much more than that and I began to understand and adopt the ideas of critical literacy.

In this reflective discussion and writing activity, early literacy experiences and their evolving thoughts on literacy are used to educate and begin the internalization process (Ball, 2000). Ball describes this activity as “a readiness exercise that prepares students to consider new and different perspectives, attitudes, and visions for literacy and its uses (p. 226). This internalized activity supports their developing commitment as well as establishes the thought or idea that needs to be transformed.

In this analysis I wanted to address if and how preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching? By asking if and how, the question becomes two fold.

### Addressing the "If"

To address the "if", it would be impossible to simply answer yes or no for all preservice teachers. In the data analysis there were three important variables that contributed to whether or not the preservice teacher participants connected critical literacy to their teacher practice: 1) the level of trust in their relationship and supervision of the mentor teacher; 2) a commitment to getting to know their students; and 3) the development of a critical consciousness within their own learning experiences.

### Addressing the "How"

To answer "how" (the second part of the question), I had to examine if the preservice teacher was able to implement some elements of critical literacy into their practice. The data suggest that the preservice teacher participants used the methods course as a valuable resource for their field experience teaching. As a way to teach for critical literacy in the methods course, I modeled various drama methodologies and the use of historical biographies as a way to gain multiple perspectives. As a result, the preservice teacher participants involved multiple perspectives, historical biographies, and some form of drama in their lesson plans.

### The Relationship Between the Mentor and Preservice Teacher

From the data, a clear theme was that caring and the type of relationship between preservice and mentor teacher influenced the teaching for critical literacy. Geneva Gay (2000) suggests that caring highlights "interpersonal relationships that are characterized by patience, persistence, facilitation, validation, and empowerment for the participants" (p. 47). What this means is that preservice teachers intelligence was valued equally with

that of the mentor teacher. Active participants were in the lesson planning rather than the mentor teacher controlling and monopolizing the academic interactions. There was trust between them. When people are trusted, there is more possibility for liberation and critical dialogue (Freire, 1970).

For the participants in the study (Britney, Heather and Stacie), regardless of their mentor teacher's teaching style and use of critical literacy in their own teaching, the type of relationship between the mentor teacher and teacher intern depended strongly on two major factors. First, the mentor and preservice teacher were committed to critical literacy. Second, preservice teachers felt that regardless of the mentor teacher's supervision approach, care was expressed towards them. All mentor teachers provided the time and space for co-planning. As neither mentor teacher or preservice teacher assumed the role of "all knower." Instead, Stacie suggested that open communication with the mentor teacher tends to feel collaborative, "my mentor teacher is open to what I would like to do as long as we take the time to talk about how I am involved in her class." Britney responds to how her mentor teacher empowered her:

I agree, it depends on the relationship you have with your teacher. I have had other field experiences in the past. This time around, I had a strong connection with my host teacher and she encouraged me to teach the way I wanted to teach the lesson. I felt more comfortable teaching in this class.

In Heather's final reflection paper comments, she comments on how well her mentor teacher facilitated the field experience:

I have had a memorable learning experience with my mentor teacher. During my lesson preparation process, he was cooperative, supportive, and very flexible.

Classroom practices in the schools are interpreted in contradictory ways from the university (Britzman, 2003). Often in teacher education, we try to place preservice students in a supportive type of field experience environment. However, what do we mean by supportive? There is not a clear meaning/understanding of support. The data from this study suggests that caring between the preservice teacher participant and classroom mentor teacher was a strong indication of a supportive field experience. For the participants, the relationship between the mentor teacher and preservice teacher were positive and dialogical (Freire, 1973), and this strongly influenced if and how well critical literacy approaches were occurring in the classroom. Table 1 provides a conceptual model:

| <b>Preservice student</b> | <b>Primary decision maker of the lesson</b> | <b>Mentor teacher's teaching style</b> | <b>Mentor teacher's knowledge and background on critical literacy</b> | <b>Mentor teacher support and commitment towards critical literacy</b> | <b>Relationship between preservice student and mentor teacher</b> |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Britney                   | Britney                                     | Traditional                            | None  | Yes  | Excellent   |
| Heather                   | Heather                                     | Nontraditional                         | Some  | Yes  | Excellent   |
| Stacie                    | Mentor teacher                              | Nontraditional                         | Substantial   | Yes  | Excellent   |

Table 1  
Preservice Teacher's Perceptions of Being in the Mentor Teacher's Classroom

Although the mentor teachers' knowledge of critical literacy and teaching style approaches were very different between the three preservice teacher participants, the data suggests that all preservice teachers had opportunities to teach for critical literacy into

teaching if they chose to do so. After examining the data, both preservice and mentor teacher engaged in critical dialogue that supported the thought of the mentor teacher not necessarily being the "all knower". This helped relationships to build that also fostered trust. In all three situations, both mentor and preservice teacher had some form of contribution to the lesson. I describe this in further detail below.

### Stacie

Stacie's mentor teacher effectively modeled critical literacy in the classroom.

Stacie comments in one of her reflection logs:

It was interesting to see how my mentor teacher was using critical literacy in the classroom. In today's activity, the students were not given an answer. I really thought this represented critical literacy because it had the students exploring the multiple sides of an issue and coming up with their own ideas about them instead of being told what they should think.

Also, I sensed her care and high standards for her sixth grade students. For example, in the beginning of class, the mentor teachers reviewed the rubric assessment with her student and offering suggestions on how to achieve the highest points possible.

Both Stacie and I classified her mentor teacher's style as nontraditional (meaningful, active, challenging) and critical. The mentor teacher discussed in detail with me about how she wants the students to pull information from multiple sources to learn more about Alexander the Great. Students are to ask questions like, "Was he an alcoholic and would that influence his leadership decisions? What did he die from?" Through future critical readings of Alexander the Great, students would be expected to write a position paper on whether he was a true hero or not.



A positive outcome was that the classroom and university practice were more connected for Stacie, as her mentor teacher had more experience and knowledge of critical literacy. And originally from Stacie's past learning experiences, drama "act outs" and situational role-play were considered engaging and effective. However, that instructional strategy alone would not ensure effective critical literacy teaching. Regardless, the mentor teacher wanted to incorporate Stacie's ideas into the lesson. The mentor teacher was patient and validated Stacie's intelligence equally and involved role-play and "act outs" into the lesson in order to establish the "we" think in the lesson. The mentor listened to Stacie's initial ideas about planning a lesson and then expressed responsibility by setting high expectations for Stacie's achievement as a critical teacher. Her mentor teacher, a genuine caring teacher for Stacie, was persistent and held her accountable for high academic efforts and performance (Gay, 2000). As the course progressed Stacie realizes:

Instead of thinking that I could just do a fun activity and engage the students and they would learn and be excited about learning I realized that I have to do more than just give them a planned out activity and have them go along with they way I think it should go. I have to be able to plant a seed and get the students to think about a topic then get them to do the exploring and see what they come up with.

As the mentor teacher worked more with Stacie, embracing what Stacie had to offer (the drama strategies she had in mind), Stacie appreciated her mentor teacher's high expectations which helped develop an excellent relationship.

It was clear that the mentor teacher was well prepared to teach for critical literacy in the social studies. In addition, Stacie was committed to critical teaching as well.

Commitments on both Stacie and the mentor teacher's part impacted – and the trust engendered – impacted the actual teaching for critical literacy in the classroom.

### Britney

When it came to experience and knowledge of critical literacy, Britney's mentor teacher was the exact opposite of Stacie's mentor teacher. Britney describes her mentor teacher as traditional (teacher centered, lecture orientated, textbook centered). However, her mentor teacher was committed to achieve critical social studies teaching in the classroom. Because the mentor teacher knew little about critical literacy, she opened space for Britney to be the primary decision maker in the lesson planning. However, it is important to keep two things in mind. First, Britney's learning was more of a self-regulatory process. Ball (2000) describes this learning as, "struggling with the conflict between existing and personal models of the world and discrepant new insights" (p. 230). Second, the mentor teacher offered a supportive nondirective supervision approach. A *nondirective* approach is where the supervisor/mentor teacher is less knowledgeable about a topic than the preservice teacher, therefore, offering assistance in process thinking. The mentor teacher in this class has little involvement in the decision making of the lesson (Glickman, 2003). Britney was supervised in nondirective way but had an excellent and supportive relationship with her mentor teacher. Although Britney felt her mentor teacher taught in a traditional style, she felt very comfortable in the negotiation process of using nontraditional approaches in her own lessons. Furthermore, the mentor teacher gave positive recognition towards Britney's lesson accomplishments.

## Heather

Heather enjoyed her placement. She characterized her mentor teacher as nontraditional and writes in her reflection:

I valued every moment I was in the classroom, and I took advantage of having the opportunity of being in a teaching environment. I was able to observe him teach a variety of topics and issues. I observed lectures, discussions, presentations, group work, debates, and research projects among other things.

In Heather's case, the lesson planning was collaborative with much flexibility with the mentor teacher. During an interview about a lesson, Heather was in charge with facilitating:

Heather: The discussion I facilitated went really well, the kids had lots of opinions and they talked the whole period so. My mentor teacher wanted me to take only 20 minutes of the 45 minutes period, but it took the whole period.

Edric: Was he open to that?

Heather: Yes, it was fine.

Like the other two participants, Heather had an excellent relationship with her mentor teacher. Even when Heather wanted to change the collaborated lesson plan, the mentor teacher validated her pedagogical decisions in the classroom. He was understanding and flexible when Heather wanted to extend the whole class period for discussion. Heather did not feel she was an inconvenience and was able to negotiate with her mentor teacher about the lessons she would teach. Heather thought it was a valuable experience when talking with her mentor teacher about lesson plans. She felt fortunate that her mentor

teacher was extremely flexible and wasn't as influencing as many mentor teachers of other students in the methods course. She added about her second lesson that she had to teach, "He was fine with anything I wanted to do, which was great for me." Although there was mutual agreement on any given action plan as well as Heather stating in a survey that her lessons were planned collaboratively with the mentor teacher, the data would still suggest that the mentor teacher had a more nondirective supervision approach by allowing Heather to be the primary decision maker in the lessons.

In conclusion, although there were different levels of understanding of critical literacy, teaching styles, and supervision approaches used with the three participants, to some extent all involved critical dialogue and all included a caring and mutual understanding of the preservice teachers' lesson outcome. As Freire (1973) might put it, "there is no longer an "I think" but "we think" (p. 137). The data suggest that the mentor teachers demonstrated care and trust for their participants. In addition, there was dialogue, a dialogue among people whose intelligences were valued equally. Britney mentions, "My mentor teacher never taught the American Revolution so we planned together." Stacie's mentor teacher spent a great amount of patience and energy in facilitating a collaborative lesson. Stacie adds, "My mentor teacher gave me plenty of resources to look through and later we talked about my ideas." Although Stacie's mentor teacher was more knowledgeable about critical literacy, she validated Stacie's ideas by incorporating them into the lessons. Britney's teacher strongly encouraged and empowered her make the primary decisions in the lesson while validating those decisions. Britney describes feeling validated:

The students recognized me as the teacher and respected that. My mentor teacher even used me as her teacher. She would watch how I taught in the morning and was going to model her teaching after mine when she taught the lesson in the afternoon.

Heather's mentor teacher was persistent in collaborating with her. She comments:

My mentor teacher suggested that I use the junior scholastic as part of my lesson, which I agreed with. He was fine with anything I wanted to read out of it, and he accepted my plans to read the Rosa Parks play and do the tableau activity.

When Heather wanted to change the flow of the lesson, he trusted and validated her decision as well.

### Knowing Their Students

The two participants, Britney and Heather, who were more independent in their field experience benefited from their attempts of getting to know their students. Both participants made additional efforts to know their students more as a result, the data would suggest that their relationships with their students were positive.

Heather would put in extra hours at her school: "I loved being my field experience. I went extra days. I want to be there!" Heather was able to know her students' capabilities through her continual interactions with them:

I learned that sixth graders are more knowledgeable about issues that I had given them credit for. They surprised me almost every time I went in with their various insights and opinions about topics and issues. Of course they do not know everything, but they know more than enough to have effective debates and

discussions in class. Knowing the students' knowledge and willingness to participate helped me a lot when I taught my future lessons.

Heather learned various insights from the students. More importantly, supporting Heather's growing critical consciousness, she learned from the students. Heather discovered that knowing her students capabilities becomes key as she further plans social studies lessons that infuse a wide range of critical literacy.

Although many preservice students in the course mentioned that they didn't even know their students' names, Britney informed the class that she had made seating charts and took the time to memorize each student's name. She states, "Knowing the kids names was helpful. I knew most of those kids' names and they appreciated that I think." The students had responded positively to the fact that Britney knew their names right away. Britney contributes this effort to the positive relationship she had started with her students.

The data also suggests that Britney would have specific conversations with her mentor teacher about the socioeconomic backgrounds of her students. In addition, Britney contributes this knowledge to the connections she made with her students:

She wouldn't tell me their specific backgrounds, but she would explain things to me that I wouldn't pick up myself, like she would point out different problems about the class and problems in the school. I learned about many of the students and their families. I made special connections with them. If I had more time with the kids, I would have gotten a lot more out of it.

My final note is that the characteristics described in Heather and Britney's situation are unique compared all the other preservice students enrolled in the course. Britney was the only person who memorized her students' names as well as informed me that knowing the cultural background of her students had supported her relationships or connections with the students. Heather was the only person who spent extra days with her students and was able to learn more about their capabilities.

#### Knowing Students Provides Opportunities to Teach a Wider Range of Critical Literacy

For ten weeks, preservice teachers and participants spent four hours a week in the classroom. For the most part, the preservice teacher participants did not spend their entire four hours with the same middle school students. In the final survey, all three participants admitted to getting to know some of the students but overall said that they did not know most of their students. The data suggests all three participants had the desire to get to know their students better and concluded that if they had more time in the classroom, they would have been able to teach for a wider range of critical literacy approaches. The data would further suggest that stronger relationships with the students might have raised critical consciousness with the teacher and students. Based on their reflection papers and focus group interviews, having the time to know a larger number of their students would have made it more comfortable to teach critical literacy in the classroom. For example, Stacie felt that knowing more of her students would impact how well critical literacy would look in an entire classroom:

I needed more time to consider the backgrounds and histories of all of my students, not just the ones who were raised in the same atmosphere I was. Students must be allowed to explore events from their own perspective and learn about

social studies from all perspectives. While in class, students should not feel they have to conform, but should be encouraged to think for themselves.

Stacie recognized in her 10-week field placement that her time was limited. Stacie comments near the end of the course that taking the time to know all students and establishing a relationship would open a space for all students to engage in critical literacy in the classroom. She didn't do this as much during her actual field experience since the time felt limited.

Although Heather spent more hours and days in her field placement she still acknowledged the limited time she had with students and how that played a role in her teaching:

The one thing I regret is not having a closer, more personal relationship with the students in the class. It was very difficult to get to know the students on a personal level considering I was only in class for one or two days a week, and most of the time I was observing. Knowing them more would have been beneficial for me when I taught my lessons.

#### Knowing the Students: Finding the Time and Space

Times and spaces were major issues in the participants' field experience. In one focus group the effectiveness of previous field experience program (called First Year School Experience Program) began the conversation:

Stacie: The kids were confused because they were in the middle of the mentor teacher's lesson and we stopped and did something totally different of mine on Thursday and then they picked it back up on Friday.

Edric: The structure makes it difficult. Do you have any suggestions?



Preservice Teacher X: I think the First Year School Experience Program at the university was helpful because you were in the school for 16 hours a weeks so you knew what's going on. You get to know the kids and you have a better feel for the kids.<sup>1</sup>

Stacie: I feel the same way. It was hard because I didn't even know the students' names. Knowing what situations they were invested in, like I don't know them. I don't know how they learn best, so it would be easier if you were in the classroom and got to know them.

Britney: I agree with the others. When I was in First Year School Experience Program for four days a week, you got to know the kids all the time. It was like you were a second teacher.

The participants made the connections between having the space/time to know students and how that influences effective teaching.

#### Knowing the Students From Different Racial and Class Backgrounds: The Challenges

Britney troubles that assumption as the only individual who acknowledged how it it's difficult to get to know her students as a white middle-class teacher. Britney was critically literate in her comment, "Teaching and getting to know students' from a different background than yourself is difficult because you do not fully understand what they are going through, their needs, or why they behave in certain ways." The comment by Britney is significant because she opened herself to personal interrogation as Leland

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<sup>1</sup> Preservice teacher X, Erica, was a senior not selected for the study as she did not meet the three criteria. While she seemed to support critical literacy, her lessons were mainly lectured based. Her mentor teacher stressed content coverage and requested that she follow the curriculum. Erica felt uneasy at her field placement and had an uneasy relationship with her mentor teacher and some of her students.

and Harste (2005) describe in their theoretical framework on how preservice teachers become critically literate.

However in Heather and Stacie's dialogue below, when considering the racial differences in their classrooms, they convey a sense of having to get to know their students in order to connect to the students' lives. Heather suggests that children's literature provides a way to connect with students. Stacie brought up the importance of knowing more about yourself as you get to know and teach diverse students. In the methods course, one preservice student gave a presentation on Wollman-Bonilla's article *Outrageous viewpoints: Teachers' criteria for rejecting works of children's literature*. Following the presentation, she gave a book talk on Eve Bunting's *Smoky Nights* and raised the question, "Should teachers teach this book or not?" The story addresses uprisings that took place in Los Angeles in 1992. A preservice student in the course began the dialogue.

Preservice Student X: You can't just read *Smoky Nights* and leave it.

Edric: Why not?

Preservice Student X: You would also want the students to explore why the riot happened.

Heather: I would add that if a teacher plans to bring racism issues into the classroom, it's important to connect it somehow to the students' lives.

Preservice Student X: Sounds great in theory, but what would you relate this material to?

10 SECOND PAUSE

Stacie: Well, I'm not sure if this directly answers that, but when you think of what you would or would not read to students, you should know why you are making those decisions. It was important to know your own position and biases.

After the book talk, Leland and Harste (2005) would acknowledge that Heather was critically literate when she took social action by having the class consider how to get students personally engaged with the material. From their theoretical model of developing critically literate preservice teachers, Heather exhibits the third dimension: social action. In the third dimension is a commitment to social action that somehow addresses the perceived inequities (Leland and Harste, 2005). As soon as the preservice student questioned Heather's comment, there was a pause. As the researcher, I was wondering if most of them were imagining white middle class students they had to teach and their possible reactions to the text versus the diverse students implied in Stacie's comment.

Stacie began to consider other text choices involving the sensitivities towards teaching a diverse group of learners, as well as being able to acknowledge her own power as the classroom teacher. Through her personal interrogation, Stacie was re-evaluating her own teacher identity in relation to other people.

## Beyond Internalization: Developing a Critical Consciousness that Involves Familiar Pedagogy

I agree with Ball, that internalization takes place when “teachers begin to move beyond quoting the words of theorists to populate the words of others with their own intentions, when they can appropriate the worlds and adapt them to their own purposes, then we have evidence that internalizations is occurring” (Ball, 2000, pp. 209-210).

Based on the data, I would further suggest that when internalization takes place, those teachers who reach critical consciousness attempt to implement these critical perspectives into practice when an opportunity arises. I support Ball’s claim that beginning to pose theory, to vision new possibilities, is an end goal for internalization. However, in these data, we have further seen that implementation of a theory to practice moves beyond internalization and demonstrates a transformation in the everyday practice towards critical consciousness. Even in small doses, it is a substantial indicator in determining whether preservice teachers are developing a commitment towards critical literacy.

Freire (1970) reminds us that the oppressed have so many times been taught by the ideologies of their oppressors that they have come to see the world and themselves through the oppressor’s eyes. Using Freire's theoretical framework recognizes the role of schooling in reproducing oppressive conditions in society. However, when examining the data, the three selected participants were able to step back from their lived reality with critical consciousness or what Freire calls “conscientization”. Providing them critical literacy theory, other selected readings, practical strategies, reflective writing, and discussions that pushed them to question and challenge what they were observing in

classrooms as well as their original perspectives served as the catalyst for internalization (Ball, 2000) and the beginning step for critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). The three participants made attempts to understand the messy context of schools and to interrogate their future role in the education community.

All three participants demonstrated what Leland and Harste (2005) describe as *understanding systems of meaning*, a dimension of becoming critically literate. In the following reflection papers, the participants acknowledge overcoming the beliefs and practices that are often unconsciously accepted by the dominant culture. Stacie's reaction to the readings about critical literacy as a way to improve society provides an excellent example of this move to critical consciousness:

When reading about it, I kept thinking, "yes this is the way I want to teach this is the way I want my students to learn. I want them to be involved in their learning and to want to know more." In the Chapin and Messick article it says, "The purpose of critical literacy is not to tell students what to think but to empower them with multiple perspectives and questioning habits of mind and encourage them to think and take action on their decisions." (Chapin & Messick, 2000, p.56) Isn't this what the purpose of school is? To give children the basis they need to go out into the world and make their own decisions and make the world a better place. In the Giroux (1988) article he says, "Schools appear to have little to do with the Kantian notion that they should function to educate students for a better future condition of the human race, that is for the idea of humanity. The real business of schools appears to be to socialize students into accepting and reproducing the existing society." I find this a very scary thought because if we

are simply telling our students this is how it is and how it should be then we are keeping them from making their own decisions and in turn stopping forward progress. It is like saying that our society is perfect and in the future when you are running it things should be the same, when in reality things are not perfect and the children we are teaching will be the ones to someday institute the changes that are needed. We have to encourage this way of thinking that it is ok to question what we are told and to ask why because everything is not set in stone.

Britney's reflections on the readings critique social studies textbooks. She supports the idea that information is complex and messy and goes on to frame critical literacy as a way of becoming a historical thinker:

A teacher needs "to seek out those silenced voices and perspectives and bring them into a classroom. Social studies textbooks are typically written from the perspective of the 'winners' of history, and so they rarely let the 'losers' of history speak for themselves," (Wolk, 2003, p. 57). By using several sources, students learn that any source they read is that author's interpretation of an event. They come to understand that no one way is the correct way; that it is all based on a given person's interpretation. Upon achieving this, the textbook will seem less intimidating, just like what Beck and McKeown (2002) say, "when students become aware that an author might be fallible in trying to communicate ideas, texts seem less intimidating" (p. 69). The students ultimately act as historians, investigating history first hand.

Heather's reflections on critical literacy and other readings, also demonstrates understanding and critique of today's textbook and promotes the importance of using

multiple sources. In addition, she goes further to mention the importance of having children discuss their own opinions and become activists:

The readings in this class were the basis of my understanding of what exactly critical literacy is. Reading the various articles from class is what first enabled me to grasp the concept of literacy and the ways it can be implemented in class. I received many valuable articles that I will keep for the future and further reference. For example, questioning and interpreting can bring upon discussions in class where the students will be able to express their thoughts and also learn from others at the same time. "Doing critical literacy in the classroom means that an important purpose of the classroom experience is to have students engage in a critique of society, the world, and ourselves" (Wolk, 2003, p. 56). It can be important to use a textbook as a foundation, but "classroom discussion can also help students better learn content knowledge" (Hess, 2004, p. 63). Students will even be able to question their own opinions and challenge their ideas at the same time as well. One of the most essential aspects about critical literacy is to get various perspectives of issues from other people and sources.

After course readings, it was mentioned quite frequently that previous social studies teachers were boring because they used the textbook and lectured the content to the whole class. Heather concludes, "From my past personal experiences in social studies classes, there was a lack of and absence of critical literacy." All three participants made reference to examining history under one perspective and that they were never allowed to give their own opinions about a given matter. For example, Britney describes the majority of her social studies learning: "A typical lesson that consisted of reading a

section from the textbook, answering the objectives for the section, then starting the homework." For the field experience of the course, Stacie and Heather were able to begin experiencing a nontraditional social studies classroom. Unfortunately Britney's field experience placement was no different than what she grew up with (with the exception of the lessons she taught within the class). However, she learns from her peers:

I found it very interesting what's happening in other people's field placement. All my mentor teacher does is read the book out aloud in class then they answer the questions based on what they read. That's what they do. They are not open to any other resources. It's just the textbook. You learned based on that. So, hearing about activities in other classrooms gives me idea for when I have to teach my lesson plans and also shows me other methods of teaching that are not solely based off of the social studies textbook.

Britney demonstrated critical consciousness with her resistance to teach social studies like her former teachers and current mentor teacher. Again, she was able to step back from her lived reality with critical consciousness and reject those traditional learning experiences to inform her future teaching. After Britney taught her second lesson in her field placement, she compared her previous observations of the students and mentor teacher:

When I was comparing my lesson to my teacher's typical lesson, it appeared that the students were more engaged in my lesson. They were getting more involved with the material. I tried to incorporate critical literacy into this lesson to see how



it would work with the students. I was very pleased with the results, as was my mentor teacher.

Once Britney had the opportunity to attempt to teach on her own, she responded with positive remarks. In Britney's field placement observations, she had been witnessing what Freire (1970) describes as the banking concept of education where the teacher deposits the information into the student. Britney saw a need to reject the banking concept, instead developing a problem-posing education where students were more conscious and always unveiling multiple realities. Britney was more committed to face the upcoming challenges ahead:

Although it may be challenging, incorporating critical literacy in my future social studies classroom will be a necessity for me. I understand that I will have to cover a certain amount of material in a given amount of time. This is what will make including critical literacy challenging. But, if I do not integrate it, then what am I depriving the students of? How effective of a teacher will I be? I will have to have the textbook as a baseline for the topics I must cover. However, I will also have other resources at hand for students to use, such as childrens' books, literature, newspaper articles, journal entries, documents, movies, and other such materials.

In the course, Britney read and engaged in activities that used multiple sources. She had listened to Heather and Stacie about their nontraditional field experiences. Listening to these stories can be an educational tool for social movements (Selig, 2006). Afterwards, Britney resented the notion of how her mentor teacher taught and was motivated to teach differently and more critically. When Britney taught her lessons, she used multiple

sources as one way to support her critical teaching. This process is what Freire (1970) calls praxis, reflections and action upon the world in order to transform it (p. 87).

#### Critical Consciousness in a Model Lesson in a Methods Course

While the preservice students critiqued the social studies textbook, read about the use of multiple sources, and taught some lessons, they experienced how written text can be limited with its interpretations and representations. Rumel and Quintero (2006) believe there is a strong connection between critical pedagogy and using community arts in teaching because an outcome of such encounters can be transformative action. They see this clarification as Freire (1970) does when he defines conscientization as the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act (p. 88). Community art can be used to reflect alternative ways of knowing, stories from voices that have traditionally been silenced in the United States and voices from other communities around the globe. In class, we read Daniel Kelin's *To Feel as Our Ancestors Did: Collecting and Performing Oral History* (2005). His user-friendly text shows ways drama can explore and perform stories of family, community, and heritage. In supporting culturally responsive teaching, performing our stories acknowledges the legitimacy of cultural heritage of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum (Gay, 2000). The step by step procedure suggested in Kelin's (2005) book are as follows: 1) project a theme; 2) drama skills building; 3) mock interviews; 4) collect oral histories; 5) devising sequence; 6) music and movement workshops; 7) design and production; 8) rehearsal process; 9) performance; and 10) project assessment. The process involves students in oral history interviews, choosing

certain material to explore, creating and performing stories, and sharing their learning with peers (Kelin, 2005).

After we read Kelin's work, we collected and performed an oral story from a Japanese woman named Gumi. Here is how the project went: After reading Gumi's biography sketch, Stacie asked the class, "What should the interview focus on?" After some brainstorming, the class decided to focus the interview on how her father's military involvement affected her learning experiences in school. When the topic was established, Stacie conducted some interview skill building exercises before developing actual questions. Some of the questions in the interview included:

Can you talk about the father's view on the military in Japan and World War II?

Did your school and father ever conflict? Can you share an episode?

What are the teacher's views about the military and can you discuss their opinions?

In the oral telling, Gumi described her life as a student in Japan. A major conflict was that her father supported the military meanwhile her school had anti-military views and had purposefully left nationalism out of the school curriculum. Gumi told the methods class that teachers were somewhat prejudiced towards her because of her father. Gumi goes on to say:

In the fifth grade, one of my teacher's was leaving the school permanently. The teacher had written a goodbye letter for everyone but me. The teacher specifically told me that I did not receive a letter because my father was in the military. I was so upset. After that, I would learn more about my father's views during our family dinner times.

As the instructor, I facilitated the next activity. Students were divided into two groups and asked to create a performance based on the interview transcript of Gumi. Both groups decided to focus on the moment described above. Both groups listened to the same oral telling of the event and then created and performed that event in four scenes. A brief description of the two group performances follows.

#### First Group Performance

**Scene One:** Gumi shows confusion at the family dinner table as her father speaks his supportive views on the military in Japan.

**Scene Two:** Gumi's teacher hands out goodbye letters to every student because she is leaving the school. However, the teacher does not give one to Gumi because her father is in the military. Gumi questions the teacher's fairness.

**Scene Three:** Gumi approaches her father to understand his perspective more.

**Scene Four:** Gumi stands between her father and teacher to develop her own views.

#### Second Group Performance

**Scene One:** Gumi and her teacher have a positive relationship.

**Scene Two:** Gumi's father picks her up from school and the teacher notices that her father is saluting someone. The teacher figures out that he is in the military.

**Scene Three:** Gumi's teacher is writing letters to her students and does not write a letter to Gumi because of her father's military status.

**Scene Four:** Gumi cries.

After the class watched each other's performance, they compared and contrasted them. Stacie pointed out an important difference in the performances. Although each group

heard the same telling, each group had developed a different interpretation and representation of Gumi. Stacie's response to both performances was critically literate and significant, because it demonstrated her awareness that text (the performances) can be constructed from and towards different types of realities (Luke, 1997). Based on Leland and Harste (2005) model of becoming critically literate, Stacie demonstrated her understanding of systems of meaning. One interpretation and representation was Gumi as proactive in her thoughts and actions while the other portrayed her as sad and helpless.

For the daily reflection exit cards, some preservice students in the class indicated that they did not understand the point of the lesson. One preservice teacher responded, "Why is this necessary? It was fun and all, but I don't think it helped me understand Gumi's story better." On the other hand, Britney responded in a way that demonstrated her growing critical consciousness:

Performing an oral history about the same story can help students interpret different views. We did in class the same story with two different groups, but the groups interpreted things differently. So the class got to see two perspectives on the same story. With a bigger class, one class could see three or four perspectives or views about a story. Performing the same story with different groups can teach students multiple perspectives.

Britney understood that we were not trying to learn the whole of Gumi's life story but instead realizing how subjective all storytellers of history really can be. Further she recognized that there were multiple ways in which the reality of Gumi might be represented or constructed. Based on developing into critically literate teachers (Leland and Harste, 2005), Britney demonstrates *social action* by addressing the perceived

inequities of gender representation and suggesting what might or could happen with gaining more perspectives.

Heather realized how the community arts bring us the stories of those who have not appeared in history text. She noted:

I never realized the tensions between Asian countries. Gumi's oral telling was insightful about that issue she described. I'm sure these tensions are not mentioned in the social studies textbook.

Stacie's earlier comment that teachers need to be aware of their own positions and bias reminded us that as teachers, we are careful on how we deliver stories to our students. Based on the daily exit reflection cards, this activity supported that participants raised their critical consciousness. In Stacie's reflection, she articulated of the problems of how information is represented in schools:

In getting the students to understand that just because it says something in a textbook does not mean it is the all mighty truth of the matter and is not seen in any other ways. The generalized American view of everything is not always exactly how things happened. Too often when I was in school I was made to feel like what my teacher said was the almighty answer and I couldn't have different views than my teacher. Things are different today, the world is much more diverse and children must be accepting of new ideas and be able to come up with their own views and support them.

Unfortunately, Stacie and other participants have these types of experiences at the *university* level. Every participant recalled many experiences of their teachers from elementary to college, lecturing from the textbook. During the reflection phase of

performing Gumi's story, Stacie speaks about a current educational psychology course she is taking:

I have a psychology class and I'm supposed to be sitting there, absorbing things but I'm thinking this is awful. I would never do this in my classroom. I write down her lecture notes. Will I remember what she is saying? I think "no" as she's talking 90 miles a minute. It's ironic that she's lecturing to us about the development of learning and keeping learning active. It's ironic.

If the way we learn strongly influences the way we teach (Nieto, 2000), it makes sense to have preservice teachers take a critical look at their learning experiences. In order to raise critical consciousness, it is necessary to create a space to critique and discuss the effectiveness of various learning practices. Textbook limitations as well as their overuse, can be internalized by preservice students. Thus, discussion about textbook use and representation becomes an effective first step to critical consciousness and eventually towards praxis. Once the preservice teachers develop a critical consciousness related to a text being represented, they are more likely to bring critical literacy approaches into the classroom.

In conclusion, through engagement with critical literacy approaches, preservice teachers were also developing critical consciousness and becoming critically literate individuals as they were facing situations in their engagement with critical literacy approaches. Leland and Harste (2005) stress that preservice teachers must: 1) understand systems of meanings; 2) interrogate personal involvement; and 3) take social action (pp. 67-68). Here Stacie, Heather, and Britney developed critical consciousness deciphering their own past and present experiences with respect to larger school-wide issues. All

three participants were committed to not teach under the banking concept model (Freire, 1970), a model that is still seen in many social studies classrooms. Consciousness raising was occurring as they were questioning the school system that they were involved in. Praxis, a combination of working to transform social studies education and reflecting through dialogue was evident from the participants.

The next section addresses "how" the preservice teachers taught critical literacy for social studies. This next section includes 1) the range of critical literacy approaches preservice teachers choose to implement in their field experience classrooms, and 2) whether or not preservice teachers have increased critical consciousness in using effective problem-posing and dialogue in their social studies learning environments.

#### Demonstrating Social Action: Which Approaches Do Preservice Teachers Use?

Among the wide range of approaches in critical literacy, what was the ultimate action of the preservice teacher participants? A dimension of becoming critically literate is social action (Leland & Harste, 2005). In the methods course, we discussed and practiced several pedagogical approaches in the social studies including multiple perspectives, inquiry, drama, bringing in students' knowledge, activism, questioning the author or power in text, teaching anti-oppressive education, analyzing text with a position, deliberation, juxtaposing text that shows complexity, providing alternate text that represents missing voices, creative, and independent thinking. I wanted to know which approaches (if any) would be common among the three participants and would be examples of social action in the social studies. In examining their practices, I provide a description of the critical literacy practices they actually used in their teaching. A



discussion and analysis of these practices are described. Finally, I provide an overall analysis of the types of practices the participants had chosen as well as a model of preservice teachers' critical consciousness development.

#### Stacie's Lesson on Alexander the Great

Stacie wanted to explain the concept of multiple perspectives to her sixth grade students through act-it-out activities. Her main objective in the lesson was to have students pick out key information from a single text that was representing Alexander the Great as a hero and then as villain. Using informational reading strategies that were previously learned in the classroom, she had some students examine the event from Alexander's conquest from the perspective of the conqueror. With the same text, she had some students examine the event from the perspective of the conquered. The students were then to perform act-it-outs and relate key information about both perspectives. At the end of the lesson, Stacie's questions included, "Why is it important to be aware of the two perspectives of Alexander's conquests? How is it possible that one person can represent both sides of a perspective?"

This is an example of developing students' ability to read from a critical stance. "Readers have the power to envision alternative ways of viewing the author's topic, and they exert that power when they read from a critical stance" (McLaughlin and DeVogd, 2004, p. 53). In the methods course, we discussed how Rosenblatt's (2002) notion that no reading experience is objective and readers are always making choices in their thinking. In this exercise, the students were making choices on how they would think and read about Alexander the Great. Although the lesson planning was guided by her mentor

teacher, in Stacie's lesson reflection, she provided the following reflection point in her lesson:

In my field experience this quarter I did an activity on Alexander the Great that I thought was a good representation of how to bring critical literacy into the classroom. The students were asked to look at an event from Alexander's conquest from two perspectives, that of the conqueror and of the conquered. The students then presented each side to the class through a short play as the rest of the class watched each event and perspective. In the end the students were to write an editorial in which they wrote about their opinion on whether Alexander was a hero or a villain and why they thought that. I thought this was a good lesson using critical literacy because it had the students looking at a source and finding the different viewpoints within it.

This is an example of Stacie's developing ability to understand on taking a critical stance, in this case, making choices on how to read a text about Alexander the Great. Each group eventually performed their interpretation of the text.

#### Heather's Lesson on the Bombing of Hiroshima

Heather taught a lesson that involved three different readings and perspectives on the dropping of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. The three perspectives were a sixth grade Japanese student whose family was killed, a writer for a local newspaper, and a Chief of Staff to Roosevelt and Truman. Heather worked within a pedagogy described by Zinn (2005) as the juxtaposition of historical texts that enables students to see the messiness of viewpoints and to gain a more critical reading of reality (p. 16). It was important in a story about Hiroshima that Heather brought in the voice of the sixth grade Japanese

student. She attempted to grasp a perspective that was rarely seen in social studies textbooks, the victim as well as provided a perspective from a person of the same age group as the students.

In teaching the lesson, the class was divided into three groups with each group taking one perspective. The questions developed by Heather were similar to questions that I provided in a previous lesson in the methods course. After reading the text on their assigned perspective, each group had to respond to questions that included:

Who is the communicator of the author?

What audience is the target of the message?

Was the message factual in style, emotive, biased?

How justifiable is the purpose of the communication, according to an evaluation in terms of the reader's values?

Was it persuasive?

The purpose of these questions was to understand how text position readers to make meaning a certain way (Luke, 1997). After each group did the reading and question responses, Heather asked each group to discuss the perspective they were assigned.

Afterward, Heather had the students participate in an informal debate about whether the United States should have dropped the bomb or not. Again, the class was divided into two groups – one group supporting and one not supporting the decision to drop the atomic bomb. It was important for Heather to keep all the perspectives in mind. Heather was the moderator and asked questions like, “How would you have felt if you were the one who dropped the bomb that killed 110,000 people?” and “Aside from dropping the bomb, could there have been an alternative method of ending the war?”

When little discussion was occurring, Heather would ask a direct question to a student. One of her questions in the middle of the debate was “Do you think the bomb was racially motivated?” Following there was some silence. This silence might be read as resistance from the class to Heather's lesson. Finally, a student quickly replied, “It had nothing to do with race. America has a lot of power, that’s just the way we are!” This student's reactions actually silenced the class even more. In this discussion, Heather had pushed her students to interrogate the personal involvement that exists when we go to war. Although little discussion followed Heather’s questions, one could read that her asking the question as an attempt to teach for critical literacy in her lesson. However, silence and a defensive reaction occurred as soon as Heather, who is Korean American, mentioned racial motives in her questioning. Once Heather experienced this resistance/silence she dropped her question. This experience can be a common occurrence in teacher education for teachers of color as Delpit (1995) reminds us:

1. Many believe accounts of their own experiences are not validated in teacher education programs or in their subsequent teaching lives
2. Many frequently encounter negative racial attitudes towards themselves
3. Many often felt isolated from instructors and other students during their teaching training (pp. 108-122)

Heather was attempting to model critical literacy teaching by pushing students to think about the United States and the conditions of Japanese people. However as the instructor and researcher, I was concerned about how this situation might decrease Heather’s comfort and increase her isolation within the methods course. I was also troubled with my own actions as the instructor since I offered little support while she was stuck in this

situation. This is an area of future study for me, both as a researcher and teacher educator.

#### Heather's Lesson on Rosa Parks

In a second lesson, Heather's goal was to teach her sixth grade students about Rosa Parks and her important place in our history. In addition, she wanted to promote critical thinking and creativity. Some of her drama activities were learned from Stacie's previous lesson and the instructor's lesson on collecting and performing Gumi's oral story. The beginning of Heather's lesson had students thinking about what they would do if they were put into a similar situation to Rosa Parks. She did this by asking the students, "What would you do if our middle school decided to make it a rule that everyone had to start wearing school uniforms? What would you do about this?" In this discussion, Heather advocated, "If you truly think something is unfair, you should take your stance for better change." When I asked Heather how her lesson was related to critical literacy, she responded:

My first question to the students encouraged them to think for themselves about what they would do with a rule/law they didn't agree with. I asked them the uniform question thinking that they would disagree with the mandatory uniform policy, which ended up working out as I had planned. They evaluated an issue and came up with their own opinions about it because it was a topic that they could connect to their own lives. It also initiated a discussion, which is an important part of critical literacy. Involving students in the discussion allowed them to form opinions, hear different perspectives from their classmates, and to think about real issues that are out in society.

During the first part of her lesson, Heather appeared to be making some important connections to common critical literacy approaches which included discussion, activism, and decisions in which students think creatively and think by themselves (Wolk, 2003). After the students had their discussion, she related it to her lesson on Rosa Parks. Following an in-class play reading on Rosa Parks, there was a class discussion on how one person could make a difference and could inspire people to stand up for the civil rights movement. What ended up happening was Heather reinforcing the message to her students, “If you think something is unfair, you should take a stance.” If one group of students created their tableaux that represented something unfair, Heather would repeat that message. At the concluding discussion of her lesson, Heather related throughout her idea throughout her lesson. When I asked her why she kept repeating that idea, she said, “I wanted students to focus on the social issue of civil rights and the inequalities that once existed in America.”

Another critical literacy element was that students were asked to select the most important aspect of Rosa Parks' life (as depicted in the play) and reproduce it by creating frozen pictures or tableaux about it. The tableaux activities were facilitated similar to the way I had facilitated them in the methods course. Unlike many preservice teachers who had thought tableaux or frozen pictures would be ineffective with children, Heather attempted to do this in her actual teaching practice. Heather had asked students to construct frozen pictures of the most significant aspect of Rosa Parks. She was confident that her choice of drama strategy was a good one:

This lesson plan also enabled the students to think creatively during the tableau activity. The tableau involved the students in active learning and after reading and

understanding the play, they were able to ‘act’ out something important they learned about Rosa Parks.

After students performed their frozen pictures, Heather asked the students to give an explanation on why they thought those particular frozen pictures were most significant to them.

This activity is an example of drama where biography and history were connected in a way to make better sense of their lived experiences (Mills, 1959). This overall activity allowed the sixth grade students to enter history in an active way meanwhile allowing them to think of how and where this activity might fit into their own time (mandatory uniform policies).

I was concerned, however, with Heather’s representation of Rosa Parks. When I observed her teaching, she said to her class, “Rosa Parks was just an ordinary person that one day decided to make a difference.” The theatrical play and her follow up comment were really a misrepresentation of Rosa’s actions. Similar to textbooks and other literature, the play depicted Rosa Parks as apolitical and spur of the moment; in contrast, her autobiography documents her long-term involvement in political action. After observing Heather’s first period class, I discussed this issue with her. For the future class periods, she assured me that she would mention Parks as more of an activist.

#### Britney's Lesson on Paul Revere

Britney asked the students, “How would you feel if the British were invading our land? What would you do?” After some quick responses, she asked, “What do you know about Paul Revere?” Many students responded that he warned that the British were coming. She read to the class a poem called *Paul Revere’s Ride* by Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow. After the reading, she stated, “You may think the book is based on a true story, but it’s not all true.” Britney read an additional text titled, *The Real Ride* according to Paul Revere’s account. She then provided the class with additional biographies and timelines about Paul Revere. Through reading and writing exercises, students were asked for an interpretation of the event. Little dialogue was occurring and students were a bit confused on the assignment expectations. At the end of the lesson, Britney had a reflective writing exercise. She asked the class, “What kind of a person was Paul Revere?” Students were expected to write it down and turn it in. Students struggled with the lesson because it appeared they rushed through the material. Britney was frustrated and added, “I would have liked to have done more with the timeline, discuss the quotes on Paul Revere’s own journal, and hear the students’ reactions to his biographies and timelines.”

When I asked Brittney to describe how her lesson was linked to critical literacy, she replied:

My lesson involved reading and understanding the poem. This required the students to interpret what the poem was saying into words that were more easily comprehensible. By then extending what is learned in the poem to a timeline of actual events and a biography, literacy in theory, practice, and pedagogy are being used because students are interpreting the poem and applying it to the timeline and drawing conclusions from that. They are also delving deeper into the poem by learning about Paul Revere’s life. The students’ homework also practiced this because it required them to look back on everything that was covered in class and to describe Paul Revere as a person (whether he was smart, courageous, brave,



cowardly, etc.) and explain why they thought that. When explaining why, they had to refer to what was discussed in class.

Britney's lesson served to help students to attempt to become historical interpreters. An influential reading from the methods course was McLaughlin and DeVogd's *Critical literacy as comprehension: Expanding reader response* (2004). Britney's students were developing a critical stance by juxtapositioning various texts that helped demonstrate multiple perspectives about Paul Revere.

#### Common Practices: Multiple Perspectives, Historical Biographies, and Drama

I wanted to know which teaching practices (if any) would be common among the three participants. Many preservice teacher participants' lesson formats involved multiple perspectives, historical biographies, and some form of drama. The three approaches they commonly used were directly influenced by their discussions in the social studies methods class. Specifically, they wanted to move away from traditional social studies learning and teaching. All three participants define traditional social studies as using *one* textbook, meaning a single perspective and single text, and a person *lecturing* the content to students. As a reaction to these negative experiences, the participants reacted by not wanting to do exactly that: They truly wanted it to be engaging and not just one source or perspective involved. Again, that was there experience in their own learning of this was a common criticism during the discussions in the method course.

### Replacing the Textbook

The method course addressed a wide range of critical literacy approaches. However, the participants tended to use approaches that ignored the social studies textbook completely. Instead, when planning their lessons, the participants' conversations stressed the idea of bringing in other sources or perspectives and let the learners discover on their own. No participant considered using the social studies textbook to question, point out missing voices, etc. Given their social studies learning histories, the methods course activities, and the observations in the field, the participants took sort of an "anti-textbook" stance. I was a bit concerned by this because when the participants have more experiences in education, we could speculate that they'll encounter district curriculum mandates that may require them to use textbooks. Perhaps as the instructor, rather than just critiquing the textbook in the methods course, I could have used the textbook as a way to model critical literacy in the middle grade classroom.

### Replacing the Lecture

Like many preservice students, the participants were desperate to avoid the banking concept and practice engaging activities. For the focus group and individual interviews, the participants stressed that all lecture was boring/ineffective. As a result, the participants incorporated many alternative strategies they had learned in previous experiences or in the methods course.

A useful pedagogical tool (Freire, 1970) is dialogue, a discussion among people whose intelligence is valued equally. All of the participants wanted dialogue and critical consciousness to occur in their lessons, but attempts to implement dialogue were limited or ineffective, due to their lack of preparation or knowledge on how to *facilitate* a

dialogue. From the interviews and reflection papers, the data suggests that the selected participants would strongly recommend effective discussions in all critical social studies classrooms. However, in my observations of their teaching, discussions were ineffective or nonexistent even as they stated they were highly valued in the interviews, and in their lesson plans. Among the three participants, discussion was unplanned, limited, or ineffective. Heather was the only participant who attempted to run a full discussion-based lesson session. Heather starts one of her discussions on the bombing of Pearl Harbor by saying, "I don't know if you guys want to talk about this or not..." This is not a recommended approach to begin an effective discussion. From another lesson, Heather reflects from one of her planned discussions:

I wanted to have a discussion of some sort, rather than have the students read and write during the period. I knew that not all the students would know the meaning of Veterans Day, so I decided to make a short power point while I discussed some background information briefly.

Heather calls it discussion but she was mainly lecturing on the information with her power point presentation. Luckily, the students had some questions and the "discussion" lesson extended from 20 minutes to the whole period.

All three participants strongly believed that social studies education involves students critiquing society. It's important to note, that a critique in a social studies classroom would naturally require a successful discussion to take place. However, if the teacher has trouble with managing a discussion, it becomes a barrier to critique an issue in the classroom. Based on my observations, in order for preservice teachers to critique society or to teach critical literacy, they need specific training on how to facilitate a

discussion. If they don't gain these skills, they resort back to what feels safe: traditional teaching.

There were also some limitations on how the participants taught multiple perspectives. Stacie writes in her final reflection, "The most important thing I think I will take from this class is the idea that there are multiple views to every event and that I must consider that when in the classroom." In many final reflection papers as well as the lesson that I observed, many perspectives were still viewed from a neutral standpoint and avoided critiquing any person or event. Basically, there was no planning for multiple perspectives. The preservice teachers simply advocate and put in "more" perspectives and resources in the learning environment with limited or no discussion, simply expecting each student to come up with their opinion. One pedagogical tool that Freire (1970) offers is problem-posing education where you provide information while simultaneously questioning the information. While this was modeled in the social studies methods course, preservice teachers and participants struggled to incorporate multiple perspectives in their lessons. However, participants were beginning to problem-pose by providing additional information to achieve multiple perspectives but rarely questioned the perspective embodied within these perspectives. Thus, the dialogue needed to raise critical consciousness was very limited.

## Summary and Grounded Theory of Critical Literacy and Consciousness of Preservice Teachers

Most social studies teacher education programs would like their preservice teachers to be critically literate, that is able to question the dominant power in world, aware of their own privileges, and able to take social action in their teaching (Leland and Harste, 2005). Further, critically literate teachers are able to address issues such as racism, sexism, corporate and media hegemonies, and the effects on the environments of individuals and systems (Wolk, 2003, p. 102). It was evident in this study that the participants were at the beginning stages of developing into critically literate teachers. However, there were some key structural supports that were in place that facilitated “baby steps” toward teaching for critical literacy. First, Ball’s (2000) notion of *internalization* among the participants took place particularly in relation to critical literacy strategies used in the method courses. Second, the mentor teachers provided care and support throughout the field experience, through their dialogue and conversations with the preservice participant teachers. Evidence also suggested that if preservice teacher participants get to know their students, a wider range of critical literacy approaches could be implemented and thus critical consciousness would more likely to occur as well. Essential critical approaches such as problem-posing and dialogue were supported by the preservice students and participants. However, the data suggests critical approaches need more attention in the methods course in order for internalization and critical consciousness to take place.

## The Relationship Between the Mentor Teacher, Students, and Critical Literacy Teaching

A field experience that feels safe is more likely going to nudge the preservice teacher within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Because there are many other obstacles that the preservice teacher must overcome, the mentor teacher is important when it comes to being a mentor and establishing a supportive and risk-free environment for him or her. In addition, when attempting to get to know the students, the mentor teacher can be a valuable resource. Critical consciousness and the teaching for critical literacy are more likely to rise when a positive and trusting relationship between the mentor and preservice teacher exist. The following grounded theory is based on the data analysis of the relationship between the methods instruction, mentor teachers, and the development of preservice teachers' critical literacy and consciousness. It is this:

*Preservice teachers develop critical consciousness through supportive contexts, engagement with critical literacy practices, and seeking relationships.*

## Chapter 5

### Findings and Implications

The purpose of this study was to focus on how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching? Drawing on a Vygotsky's (1981) sociocultural perspective of *internalization*, this study considered how particular experiences within a particular field experience-based context can raise Freire's (1970) notion of *critical consciousness* and influence teacher practice concerning critical literacy and its strategic use when teaching social studies.

This study was undertaken to help address the literature on teaching critical literacy in a social studies field experience, as there are few studies examining critical literacy in teacher education. Most studies focused on the critical literacy development of preservice teachers in literacy and multicultural education courses (Ball, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Leland and Harste, 2005). However, there were no studies found that examined critical literacy methods in a social studies methods and field experience course. Researchers continually stress the need for students to consider critical literacy in their teachings (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Luke. 1997). Therefore, a look at the

experiences of preservice social studies teachers attempting to engage critical literacy in their social studies field experience was the focus of this study.

### Summary of Methodological Details

The participants in this study were three preservice teachers enrolled in the social studies methods and field experience course. Additional participants included mentor teachers of the participants and myself as the researcher.

This study took place at The Ohio State University College of Education and participating middle schools. For ten weeks, 2.5 hour session per week, I taught an undergraduate social studies methods course at the university. We engaged in activities that often encouraged the use of drama to teach for critical literacy in the social studies. Meanwhile, preservice students would spend an additional 4 hours in a middle school social studies field placement.

I recorded field placement teaching observations and reflections in field notes. Two focus groups and individual interviews were conducted. Documental data were collected which included preservice students' lesson plans, field observation notes, and written reflections.

As stated in the introduction, the main purpose of this study was to address the question: Given both field experience and a social studies method course, how do preservice teachers move beyond positions of cognitive internalizations of theory and practices of critical literacy toward transformative practices and commitments needed to guide them in their teaching?



### Overview of Research Findings and Insights

Findings indicate that all three participants had a much better understanding of critical literacy than they had at the beginning of the course. In the field experience portion of the course, I found that a positive relationship with the mentor teacher was a prerequisite for preservice teachers to develop critical consciousness and teach for critical literacy in their social studies lessons.

All three participants felt knowing of student backgrounds supported their decisions to involve critical literacy that might otherwise be viewed as risk-taking activities to others. However, participants still felt they had limited knowledge of the kinds of social and identity issues students brought into the classroom thus, limiting the dialogue and critical consciousness that could have taken place.

During the ten weeks of the social studies methods and field experience course, the participants learned about critical literacy in the social studies and attempted to approach some aspect of it in their actual teaching practice. The three participants were internalizing the material and beginning to develop into critically literate individuals, evidenced by their decisions and actions to engage critical literacy approaches in their lessons. Both university classroom and field experience allowed some preservice teachers to challenge their assumptions and beliefs.

All participants used their own backgrounds, relationships, experiences in social studies as basis for their social action. From their own traditional social studies experiences, they concluded that there was a need for critical literacy in schools. As Britney and Heather observed the lack of critical literacy in their current field placement, they began to notice that middle school students were learning in one perspective.

Britney observed firsthand the banking process where students memorized what the teachers taught. Among the three participants, while she was placed in the most restricted classroom, she successfully transformed her field experience to one that included her own practice of critical literacy. Heather who characterized her mentor teacher as nontraditional observed both banking process and some critical teaching.

Over time, the participants ability to acknowledge dominant practices in education, recognizing their own power as teachers, and taking social action in their own teachings evidenced their process of coming to critical consciousness. Like Selig (2006), this describes a situation where the preservice teacher participants were gaining an understanding that their particular difficulties were not about them, but were a result of the dominant teaching practices in practices in schools. Beyond internalization, the participants had the opportunity to re-evaluate their possibilities and attempt to create new responses to their situation(s).

#### Critical Literacy Approaches: From Methods Course to Field Experiences

During the methods course, all three participants began to think about how and why multiple perspectives were needed in social studies education. They experienced interactive activities in the methods course, some designed by the instructor while other activities were designed by the preservice teachers in the course. They reflected on how and why they would teach for critical literacy.

The participants attempted to involve problem-posing in their critical approaches in the field placement. However, participants would present additional material but would often leave their students alone in their interpretations. Sometime different viewpoints were shared but were rarely contested or discussed about.

This leads to the second main method the participants engaged, which was dialogue. Among the participants, facilitating dialogue was mostly ineffective. Hess (2001) quickly points out that discussion skills need to be taught to our preservice teachers. Both preservice and inservice teachers downplay the difficulty of worthwhile discussions, believing that it happens naturally and spontaneously: One needs to simply throw out the topic and watch a wonderful exchange of ideas unfold (Hess, 2001). A dilemma is that in many social studies classrooms, minimal dialogue is taking place. Preservice students would greatly benefit if taught how to facilitate a discussion and perhaps then given a more directive assignment such as facilitating a discussion-based activity in their field experience. However, related to their development as critically literate social studies teachers, the study suggests that the participants indeed develop an awareness of the significance of dialogue in schools. As Heather concluded:

One thing I was surprised by was the way the students were so enthusiastic and eager during discussions. I learned that "Education *is* dialogue."

All preservice teachers should discover what Heather did in the course: Dialogue has an important place in the social studies classroom. One of Freire's (1970) primary methods for teaching oppressed people to gain critical consciousness is through dialogue. Much is still left to be learned about the connections between social studies methods classes as sites and approaches that support dialogue and problem-posing.

## The Relationship Between Preservice Teacher's Identity and Critical Literacy Teaching

Most preservice teachers are very uneasy to walk into a diverse classroom of students that he or she does not know, and begin a discussion on racism or poverty. I am particularly skeptical as to how well preservice teachers who are white, middle class, and inexperienced with working with diverse families and children are able to perform such role. In this study, the participants' lessons did not involve their own students' race, gender, class, etc. And while critical literacy was a focus in the methods course, discussions about working and knowing marginalized students were not as prevalent as they might have been. As a result, in order for critical consciousness to be supported, preservice teachers need to get to know their students as much as possible within the 10 weeks of the methods and field experience course. Having insight into the values and beliefs of their students facilitates critical literacy. And when critical literacy teaching is active in the field experience, critical consciousness of the preservice teacher participants also rises.

### Implications

These implications serve teacher education preparation programs as they consider ways to foster a critical perspective of equality, justice, and diversity in social studies methods and field experience courses.

First, as critical teacher educators, it is essential that we teach beyond normative knowledge concerns of "what should be" to also include empirical knowledge, political knowledge, ontological knowledge, and experiential knowledge. Kincheloe (2004) acknowledges this as the *reflective-synthetic knowledge* that involves bringing all of our

knowledges of teaching together so they can be employed in the critical pedagogical act (p. 106). The data from this research suggests the need for more critical teacher education that seeks reflective-synthetic knowledge, particularly in the social studies curriculum.

Second, teacher preparation can provide ways preservice teachers working in diverse school communities can ask a lot of questions about teachers and teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2001) as a means to explore decisions made about critical literacy. We saw in this study that preservice teachers are still tentative about taking instructional risks with students they felt they did not know well.

Third, teacher preparation should help the preservice teachers and mentor teachers build a stronger relationship through stronger school-university partnerships. Professional development for inservice teachers regarding supervision and critical literacy would support preservice teachers in the field experience.

Fourth, teacher preparation should make sure the preservice teachers have long relationships with the students. Meanwhile, reflection assignments that address the benefits and challenges of getting to know the diversity of students the preservice teacher may work with, thus allowing opportunities for preservice teachers to become critically literate.

Fifth, teacher preparation might promote critical literacy for social studies preservice teachers by requiring lesson plans that are directly related to issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.

Finally, teacher preparation should model and teach what Dillard (1993) calls *dialogical teaching*, which consists of posing problems followed by critical discussion, encouraging deeper levels of critical thinking and dialogue (p. 94).

The implications of this study suggests teacher educators and future teachers take a stance on critical education and push for structural changes in common teaching practices and school curriculum mandates. However, this is not an easy journey as Dillard (1993) reminds us:

It is important to note that critical education toward freedom, with all of its struggles, is not necessary and enjoyable pursuit. For those who promote teacher education as a practice of freedom, the requisite critical, political, and pedagogical stance often has serious consequences, such as being viewed as a troublemaker or "radical" by colleagues, or not being liked by students (p. 90).

From this critical standpoint, Dillard acknowledges that there's resistance that exists. However, the study suggests that the potential for critical literacy as a transformative teacher preparation pedagogy is called for in today's society.

### Future Studies

In this next section, I discuss three future studies that I believe need to build on this one. One consideration focuses on the importance of preservice teachers coming to understand themselves in order to work well with diverse students. The second consideration addresses critical consciousness by examining the interactions of those in the methods course. The third consideration addresses the importance of teaching and modeling within method courses specific critical literacy approaches suggested earlier from Wolk (2003), specifically dialogic teaching (Dillard, 1993).

### Knowing Our Students, Knowing Ourselves

It is important to reiterate that social studies teaching and the understanding of the complex diversity issues will not be accomplished in one single course. When suggesting that preservice teachers take the time to know their students, we must keep in mind that

changing teacher's perspectives towards diversity persons is a long process. Gomez and Tabachnick (1991, 1992) concluded that it takes two or more semesters (32 weeks or more) before substantial reconsideration of diverse learners take place among preservice teachers. The heart of the problem is that prospective teachers have difficulty in developing their *own* identities (Haberman, 1991). From this study, I would recommend further research studies to examine ways to help activate this process. A similar study could be designed for preservice teachers to critically examine their own identities along with their students over a longer period of time than this study allowed. It is essential for this to happen early in the teacher education process since understanding one's own cultural identity is needed in order to proceed to cross-cultural understandings (Dillard, 1996; Nieto, 2000; Zeichner, 1996).

#### Conflicting Ideologies and Dialogue

Many of the preservice teachers started the course with naïve perceptions about critical literacy (including the three who were selected for this study). However, three separate profiles of preservice teachers were clear: 1) those without a commitment towards critical literacy; 2) those with a commitment towards critical literacy in the university classroom but who did not connect it in their actual teaching practice; and 3) those with a commitment towards critical literacy and who displayed some evidence of commitment in their actual teaching practice. How might the three teacher profiles and their dialogue interactions support problem-posing education? And more particularly for those without commitments to critical literacy or who cannot teach for it in their student teaching, what types of problem-posing education might help to move them towards more critical commitments in social studies? Further research would be needed to

understand if and how critical consciousness develops in this type of teacher education environment.

### Critical Literacy Approach In-Depth

In this research study, we discussed and experienced several critical literacy approaches that teachers could use in the classroom. However, the data suggests critical approaches need more attention in the methods course in order for critical consciousness among the teachers and students to take place. Rather than having a cursory glance of several different types of teaching strategies, does a focus of a particular critical literacy approach allow for a higher chance of preservice teachers using their methods in their teaching? I would like to further study the use of a particular approach. Further a self-study on my own teaching might provide additional insight to these questions. For example, since my study suggests a focus on dialogue teaching, I must be aware of complexities of dialogue. Several factors to consider when modeling and teaching dialogue in the methods classroom including designing an opening question, differentiating types of discourse, understanding student beliefs and values, assessment practices, selecting powerful text, implementing opportunity in the field experience, the role of the teacher, the role of the students and so on.

### Summary

I hope from this study, teacher educators of methods and field experience courses recognize the support structures and obstacles that preservice teachers encounter in the field experience. In this study, the preservice teachers started with their own literacy histories in order to began developing internalization and critical consciousness within



the methods and field experience course. When they attempted to teach for critical literacy in the field experience, the mentor teacher's support and knowing the students played an important role. Similar to all of the preservice teachers in the course, the participants had their own obstacles in the field experience. However, their critical awareness of the obstacles caused them to utilize their own problem posing situations as part of their learning. As Britney stated in one daily reflection, "I think it is most valuable and helpful when I listen to other peoples' situations in the field." Overall, the dialogue involved in the class discussions helped raised critical consciousness for the participants. Throughout the course, the participants took social action by teaching for critical literacy in ways that were presented as instructional strategies in the methods course. Meanwhile, the participants were still internalizing two essential components of critical pedagogy in their own teaching: problem posing and dialogue. They acknowledged the value of problem posing and dialogue in their own learning, but had some difficulty using these methods in their own teaching. While I might attribute their difficulties to their experiences in the methods course, this is definitely an area I'd like to explore in the future. However, this study provides us hope and allows us to continue to think what "might be" for a social studies methods/field experience course in teacher education.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A

### Log of Classroom Observations: Literacy in the Social Studies

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of students: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of class (minutes): \_\_\_\_\_  
Week of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
Period of the Day: \_\_\_\_\_

#### LOG OF CLASS ACTIVITY

1. Record the sequence of activities in class, indicating major shifts by recording the exact time in the left hand column. Use the right hand column to describe the content and approaches used. Record samples of student and teacher language to reflect the nature of the discussion.

*Example:*

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Description of activity</u> |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
|-------------|--------------------------------|

2. Describe the lesson (apparent purpose, unique features, texts/genre being studied) and its apparent continuity with previous and succeeding lessons.

3. If applicable, describe the type of homework assigned (reading: title; writing: task.) and the apparent purpose (to practice skills, discover information, to extend lesson, etc.)

**Content emphasis (rank all that apply)**

History \_\_\_\_\_ Geography \_\_\_\_\_ Civics \_\_\_\_\_ Economics \_\_\_\_\_  
Current Events \_\_\_\_\_ Social Skills \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities Observed (indicate % of time):**

Lecture \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Small Groups \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Silent Reading \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Oral Reading (specify by whom) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Writing \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Teacher-led discussion of content \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Teacher-led discussion of student reactions/concerns \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Student-led discussion of content \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Student presentation \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Teacher using technology (audio/visual equipment) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Non-instructional time (e.g. transitions, roll) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Other \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Literacy Emphasis**

Reading \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Writing \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Speaking \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Listening \_\_\_\_\_ %

**Sources Used (indicate % of time)**

Social Studies Textbook \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Current Event Publications (newspaper, scholastic news,) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Primary Sources \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Guest Speakers \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Children Literature \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Other \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Specify: \_\_\_\_\_ %  
\_\_\_\_\_ %

## APPENDIX B

## **APPENDIX B**

### Course Assignment Descriptions

#### **1. *Class participation and reflection cards***

Class attendance, punctuality, and active participation in activities during regular classes are required to support your peers and get the full benefits of the class demonstrations. Each week you will hand in a reflection card, in which you reflect on the work of the week before.

#### **GUIDELINES:**

1. REFLECT on the work done (e.g. record an insight you had, something you learned, something that caught your interest)
2. NOTE: remarks such as “today was fun,” “the presenter did a good job,” or “when is my paper due,” are NOT considered to be thoughtful reflections.
3. The instructor may ask you to reflect on specific elements.
4. The instructor may ask you to reflect in class or at home and hand in your card the next period.

#### **2. *Field logs***

In your field experience you will be asked to write up your observations. At least two logs from two different social studies lessons observed are required per week.

**GUIDELINES:**

1. Appendix A is a template of the field experience log that you will be using.
2. Your field log must reflect SOCIAL STUDIES lessons that you observed that week.

**3. Self-evaluation on collecting and performing an oral story**

The purpose of this in-class activity/lesson is to a) think about ways guest speakers can promote more critical listening, writing and speaking in the social studies classroom; b) discover another way to engage middle childhood students in oral stories/histories; and c) to promote critical reflection and creativity in our future social studies teachers. You will read Daniel A. Kelin's *To Feel as Our Ancestors Did: Collecting and Performing Oral Histories*. In class, we will adapt from the book and conduct some of its activities. A self-evaluation is due one week after your performance.

**GUIDELINES FOR SELF EVALUATION (1-2 pages):**

1. Provide your name, name of the story, and the date you conducted the performance. *\*Answer ALL of the following questions (2-3 sentences each) in order. \* It is not necessary to rewrite the question but NUMBER accordingly.*
2. What was the most important thing you learned in the interview that you never knew before?
3. How well did the group work together?
4. What did the drama make you think about?
5. How did the situation you acted out make you feel and why?
6. How did the drama activity support social studies learning?



7. How did the drama activity reflect critical literacy?
8. What did you learn from the activity and what would you do differently if you could do it again with the same type of group?

#### ***4. Two lesson sessions***

Students are expected to work with small groups of children using pedagogical methods they are learning in the seminar. You will design a social studies lesson plan, implement it for a small group of children, and complete an extended self-evaluation one week after the lesson. The time and day you implement the lesson must be negotiated with your cooperating teacher in advance.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR DETAILED LESSON PLAN**

1. Provide your name, title of lesson, and the date you conducted the lesson
2. State the target age group for the lesson
3. State the GOAL
4. State the OBJECTIVES (what will the student do to attain the goal)
5. List the MATERIALS needed; if music or books are used note the reference!!
6. Describe the MECHANICS or the PROCEDURE
7. State REFLECTION QUESTIONS as a form of ASSESSMENT (these refer back to your goals and objectives)

NOTE: This needs to be an “original” lesson session!

#### **GUIDELINES FOR SELF EVALUATION (3-4 pages):**

1. Provide your name, title of lesson, and the date you conducted the lesson

*\*Answer ALL of the following questions (2-3 sentences each) in order.*

*\*It is not necessary to rewrite the question but NUMBER accordingly.*

2. How effective was the preparation process with your mentor teacher (division of material, consensus/ initial disagreement?)
3. Did you present all information clearly?
4. What were the variables that contributed to the students effective/ineffective work?
5. Were your objectives clear in your leadership?
6. Were your transitions smooth?
7. Did you ask appropriate and open-ended questions?
8. What were some of the emotions you experienced as a leader during the session and what generated them (discuss both positive and negative feelings)
9. How was your social studies lesson linked to literacy in theory, practice and/or pedagogy?
10. What did you learn from the activity and what would you do differently if you could do it again with the same type of group?

***5. Reflection paper: Literacy connection in the social studies***

In a 5 page reflection paper, you will reflect on your own progress, incorporating field experience and previous reflections, the readings (with references), and other learning experiences you had during this class regarding LITERACY CONNECTIONS in the SOCIAL STUDIES. The reflection paper will be submitted in your portfolio during finals week.

**GUIDELINES (5 pages):**

Reflect on the following points, incorporating the readings and previous reflections-with references (!) and other learning experiences you had during class.

\*What have you learned in the field experience and class?

\*Have your attitudes about literacy in social studies been changed or reinforced? How?

\*Do you intend to incorporate critical literacy and balanced literacy in you own social studies teachings? Why? How?

## LIST OF REFERENCES

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