CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN U.S. HISTORY CLASSROOMS: CONSCIENTIZATION AND CONTRADICTORY CONSCIOUSNESS

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**ABSTRACT**

Hillary Parkhouse: Critical Pedagogy in U.S. History Classrooms: Conscientization and
Contradictory Consciousness
(Under the direction of Xue Lan Rong)

Critical pedagogy has been a significant interest area for education researchers and
practitioners over the past fifty years because of the promise it offers not only for more equitable,
democratic, and student-centered education, but also for a more just world. Although there have
been major theoretical contributions to the field of critical pedagogy, relatively little empirical
research has been conducted on its use in K-12 classrooms. Furthermore, the research has tended
to focus more on teachers' dispositions and approaches than it has on students' responses to
critical pedagogy. This postcritical ethnography responds to these gaps in two ways: first, by
exploring specific approaches to critical pedagogy in two 11th grade, urban U.S. History
classrooms; and second, by integrating observational data with teacher and student interviews to
illuminate how the teachers and students together resist traditional forms of schooling in the US.

The findings suggest that the approaches used by teachers with a critical orientation
included dialogue for dissent and for unfixing opinions, teaching oppression but pairing it with
examples of resistance, and encouraging students to take action to address contemporary
injustices. Students in these classrooms demonstrated critical consciousness related to racism and
their definitions of citizenship. However, dominant ideologies such as meritocracy,
individualism, American exceptionalism, and a belief in inevitable progress contributed to
students' contradictory consciousness related to sexism, capitalism, and neocolonialism.
Furthermore, these ideologies compromised students' determination to take political action to

address the social injustices they identified. Although students were planning to vote, they did not express a desire to engage in more transformative resistance such as through collective direct action. The implications for critical pedagogy practice is that educators should pair their teaching about past civil rights violations and victories with lessons on the more subtle ways that social structures continue to subordinate women, immigrants, racial and sexual minorities, and many others. This extension of critical pedagogy, which would include lessons on the concepts of ideology and hegemony, may help students understand how contradictory consciousness is sustained and in turn sustains the dominant social order.

This work is dedicated to the two teachers and fifty-three students who allowed me into their classrooms and generously shared their thoughts, concerns, and hopes with me. I learned as much from these two teachers as their students did—about reading the world, about effecting change, and about critical pedagogy grounded in love.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY

**Introduction**

Since the start of public schooling in the US, the question of how education can serve to create a more equitable society has inspired the work of countless educators and scholars (Darder, 2012). However, in 2016, education still fails to afford everyone an equal chance at economic stability and self-actualization. Class- and race-based disparities in school quality for American children actually limit—rather than promote—many children's chances of upward social mobility. Despite two decades of education reform intended to close the so-called "achievement gap" between low-income students and their more affluent peers, little has improved (Malott & Porfilio, 2011). Furthermore, the wealth gap between upper-income individuals and the rest of America continues to widen (DeSilver, 2013), raising the question of how well education is serving its intended purpose as the great equalizer.

Educators around the country are preparing the next generation to address these issues, however, and these efforts can serve as beacons of hope when the neoliberal tide shows no signs of ebbing (Malott & Porfilio, 2011). One source of their inspiration is the *critical pedagogy*[1] theorized by Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, bell hooks, and many others. Critical pedagogy, a central focus of this study, is defined here as education that aims for emancipation of historically oppressed populations, recognizes students as producers of knowledge, and bases educational methods on students' everyday realities (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). In doing so, it offers students greater opportunities to name injustice and question the status quo

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[1] Italicized terms are defined in Appendix A.

than is offered through traditional pedagogical methods that treat students as empty banks into which information is deposited (Freire, 1970).

Although critical pedagogy has been widely theorized in education literature, there are relatively few empirical studies on its usage in K-12 classrooms (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). There are examples of more specific approaches inspired by critical pedagogy, such as hip-hop pedagogy (Stovall, 2006) and critical media literacy (Leard & Lashua, 2006), but few if any studies examine critical pedagogy more broadly. Perhaps researchers hesitate to prescribe a particular form critical pedagogy should take, given that its form should be greatly dependent upon contextual factors such as student background and experiences (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). However without many models of what critical pedagogy may look like in classrooms, teachers have no support in making sense of the sometimes dense theoretical language used by critical pedagogues (Hytten & Bettez, 2011) or in applying its tenets to their own contexts.

Although there is some research on pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy (García-González, 2000; Katz, 2014), without research on the students encountering it, scholars lack evidence that it indeed helps students develop critical consciousness, as its proponents have contended (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011). The most extensive empirical work in this area was conducted by Jeff Duncan-Andrade and Ernesto Morrell (2008) who used critical pedagogy in a variety of settings in Bay Area schools. I could find no empirical studies of students' critical consciousness development through critical pedagogy in social studies classrooms. This may be surprising given that analysis of historical contributors to contemporary injustices is an important element of social critique (Giroux, 2011). U.S. History classrooms in particular offer numerous opportunities to learn both historical

foundations of current conditions as well as how activists in the past have struggled for progressive change.

**Research Questions**

In this study, I attempt to address these gaps in the research by examining possibilities for critical pedagogy in U.S. History classrooms with an emphasis on its impacts on students. My research questions are:

1. How do critical U.S. History teachers attempt to facilitate student conscientization (critical consciousness)?

2. In what ways and to what extent do students develop critical consciousness, if at all? Whereas prior studies have focused exclusively on teachers' engagement with critical pedagogy (García-González, 2000; Katz, 2014) or student resistance (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Giroux, 1983; Scott, 1990; Willis, 1977), I analyze both simultaneously in order to illuminate the interplay between pedagogy and conscientization. For this reason, the research questions will not be addressed one-by-one but rather they iteratively inform each other throughout the paper.

**Outline of the Dissertation**

The next chapter of the dissertation will review the origins of critical pedagogy, from its roots in critical theory. I will describe how Gramsci and others furthered the field of critical theory by exploring the role of culture and hegemony in shaping the common sense of the masses. The chapter will also review literature on critical pedagogy in theory, in practice, and in social studies specifically, as well as the critiques of critical pedagogy.

Chapter Three will describe the research methods of this study, which are rooted in *postcritical ethnography* (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Chapter Four will set the scene for the analysis by describing the nature of the two classrooms observed, particularly the varying

uses of dialogue in each and how these aligned with critical pedagogy. Chapter Five will explore students' *conscientization* as it related to various social structures including racism, sexism, *neocolonialism*, and capitalism. Interwoven are more depictions of the teachers' approaches, in order to illuminate how these potentially contributed to varying levels of conscientization. Chapter Six examines themes across areas of conscientization in terms of the *thresholds* students crossed and the *bottlenecks* they encountered as residual ideologies sustained some levels of contradictory consciousness. Finally, Chapter Seven synthesizes these analyses and suggests implications for teaching practice and for future research. Appendix A is a list of the key concepts used throughout the dissertation along with descriptions of each term as it is used here. Some of these terms, such as *common sense*, are not used in the conventional way, but rather as they were used by a particular theorist—Antonio Gramsci in this case.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Introduction**

I initially started this project with an expectation that my analysis would be shaped by Freirean critical pedagogy and *postcolonial theory*[2]. Over the course of the project, however, I realized that making sense of my observations required additional theoretical approaches. Although postcolonial theory could help illuminate the ways in which students' identities— particularly immigrant students subject to neocolonialism and Latin@ and Black students subject to internal colonialism (Maseman, 2013)—are constructed and deconstructed by discourses (Smith & Riley, 2009), it was the class's commonly held perceptions of social issues such as race and gender, rather than constructions of individual identities, that more compellingly answered the question of how students developed critical consciousness. Secondly, although critical pedagogy remained a central lens for my interpretations, these commonly held perceptions required some additional theoretical constructs for analysis. Such constructs included *false consciousness, contradictory consciousness,* and *mystification*[3], among others, which led me to revise my theoretical framework to expand upon Post-Marxist *critical theory*, which is a school of thought from which critical pedagogy emerged.

As postcritical ethnography is an overarching frame (both theoretical and methodological) for this study, I ought also to communicate to readers that Post-Marxist critical theory is not the only or necessarily the best lens through which to understand the data. That I found myself guided by it does not mean other observers would do the same, nor that my

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[2] Terms defined in Appendix A are italicized the first time they are used in the text.

participants would agree, were they to study these philosophies and then read transcripts from the study. But all research involves subjective choices and interpretations on the part of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), so this dissertation is not unique in this manner; rather my study is uniquely postcritical in that I make efforts to turn the critique back on myself as the researcher as I consider the ethical and political implications of the knowledge claims made. As Anders (2012) explained, postcritical ethnographers should repeatedly ask themselves, "What role do I play in the telling of it and what responsibility do I have in the production of it?" as well as "How might I interpret this differently?" (p. 104). In other words, what other representations are possible? This offers one means of turning the critique back on itself, by asking how the researcher's positioning, actions, and analysis might be critiqued. I continually posed these questions to myself throughout all stages of the research and will address them at various points in this dissertation.

**Origins of Critical Theory: Marx and His Followers**

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will here briefly describe a few of the elements of the theories of Karl Marx and his followers that are of particular relevance to this study. Some of the key concepts from these theories that shaped my interpretations of the data are *dominant ideology, false consciousness, mystification*, and *reification.* Before delving into these, I will provide some elaboration on the ways Marx permanently altered the way we understand economics, society, and power, and by "we" I refer not just to westerners but much of the world, beyond China and other countries who have experimented with communism. This is important because many Americans and others have come to associate Marxism with the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, Maoism, and other regimes that claimed to be communist (Levinson, 2011). They denounce Marxism as a direct threat to American capitalism, democracy, and religious

values. Therefore, I will briefly distinguish between Marxism and communism (in fact, Marx was not the first to propose communism) and highlight the major contributions that we owe to the 19th century German economist and philosopher (Levinson, 2011).

Today it may seem self-evident that social activities are profoundly shaped by people's access to economic security, and that the question of material production was handled differently in various eras, producing various types of societies (e.g. feudal, capitalist). However it was Marx who popularized this way of thinking and who thus allowed, for the first time, analysis of social injustices as rooted in economic systems but also as produced through human activity rather than naturally predetermined (Layder, 1994). Thus much contemporary analysis into the systemic roots of social inequities owes some debt of gratitude to Marx. For instance, the growing body of work in the political economy of education similarly focuses on the impacts of economic conditions on the political and institutional structures of a society (Weingast & Wittman, 2008).

Living during the industrial revolution in Europe and surrounded by liberal political philosophers who focused on the individual, Marx stood apart in arguing that capitalism subsumed the individual in its class-based system (Levinson, 2011). These classes were created as the owners of the means of production (capitalists) limited the wages of laborers to ensure surplus value of labor, in other words profit (Marx, 1894/1950). This departed from previous economic systems in which laborers could see a direct relationship between the amount of labor they provided and the amount of return on their labor (Layder, 1994). Influenced by Hegel's belief that history unfolded in a dialectical process, Marx predicted that laborers would eventually cease tolerating this system and capitalism would "crash under the weight of its own contradictions, giving rise to the utopian age of communism" (Levinson, 2011, p. 8).

That we have not seen the end of capitalism leads some to dismiss Marx. The term

*Marxism* evokes negative reactions from many people in the West who confuse his theories with

the actions and doctrines of the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent China, North Korea, Cuba

and Southeast Asia; however, many of the defining features of these regimes—particularly those

most condemned, such as the lack of democracy—are unrelated to Marx's theories. Much of

what is commonly attributed to Marx is actually a product of Vladimir Lenin's political doctrine,

a doctrine that greatly diverged from Marx's vision (Hobsbawm, 1994). In fact, Marx's

predictions of the failure of capitalism to support individual economic security and liberty are

finding support in the empirical work of contemporary economists. In his book *Capital in the*

*21ˢᵗ Century,* Thomas Picketty (2014) used an enormous database of historical wealth in various

countries to show that over the history of capitalism, the rate of return on capital has exceeded

the economic growth rate, leading to a rise in wealth inequality that will persist unless

interventions are made.

Others have criticized Marxism for being overly structural and deterministic, for treating

power as one-dimensional rather than fragmented, and for neglecting the complexity of social

life in its concern only with labor and the relationship of individuals to their labor (Layder,

1994). Another area of critique has been its focus on class at the exclusion of oppression based

on other social constructions such as race, ability, gender, and sexual orientation.

Nevertheless, what makes Marx's works particularly helpful, in my view, is his

explanation of why it is that workers did not revolt sooner, and why they are not currently

revolting in capitalist states across the world. For this, Marx employed theories of *dominant*

*ideology, mystification*, and *reification.* In our contemporary American context in which it is not

just workers, but also people of color, women, sexual minorities, people with disabilities, and

many others who are oppressed, these four concepts can also be useful in understanding how their oppression is sustained. It is for these reasons, in part, that Marxism gained popularity with education theorists in the 1970s and greatly influenced the development of theories of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1983).

Marx argued that culture promotes *dominant ideologies* in that "it makes that which is conventional and socially constructed seem natural and inevitable" (Smith & Riley, 2009, p. 7). As critical pedagogy scholar McLaren (2009) explained, "We have been 'fed' dominant ideologies for decades through the mass media, schools, and family socialization" (p. 70). This creates *false consciousness*, a term used by Engels and Lukács to describe the condition in which people are content despite material or other disadvantages (Levinson, 2011)[4]. One example would be poor Americans favoring market capitalism because they erroneously believe both that it is inevitable and natural, and that it allows them a way to scale the socioeconomic ladder. This is a form of *mystification*, a process that is supported by *reification.* Mystification prevents recognition of the oppressive realities of capitalism. Reification is the means by which social constructions, such as race and class for example, become perceived as objective and permanent realities unrelated to the social forces that produced them (Smith & Riley, 2009). Mystification prevents the working class from realizing that they have become objects rather than subjects capable of creative production. As a result, the workers, believing themselves to be free actors in the market system, consent to capitalism despite its stratifying outcomes.

Many followers of Marx took up this study of how ideology produces this consent through examining the "everyday cultural practices that 'produce consent' to the commodity

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[4] For a compelling response to the common critiques of the concept of *false consciousness* (e.g. from postmodernists for assuming there could be a correct consciousness, and from others for assuming people are cultural dupes), see Steven Lukes' (2011) essay, "In Defense of 'False Consciousness.'"

logic" (Foley, p. 191). According to French social theorist Louis Althusser (1969), "men 'live' their ideologies" as ideologies are a "profoundly unconscious . . . system of representations . . . that act on one in a process that escapes them" (p. 233). This shift to the study of culture, and its relations to material production and labor, characterized much of the critical theory developed by twentieth century followers of Marx. In the next section, I summarize the key concepts within critical theory that shaped my analysis of the classrooms studied for this dissertation.

**Culture and Consciousness: The Frankfurt School and Gramsci**

Although the group of German-speaking intellectuals referred to as "the Frankfurt school" were diverse in both thought and, ultimately, geographic location, they share this identifier due to origins with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, founded in the early 1920s (Smith & Riley, 2009). Two key assertions emerging from the Frankfurt School that frame this study are (a) study of culture is needed to understand the ways dominant structures are reinforced (Smith & Riley, 2009) and (b) transformation of society will first involve changes in individual consciousness (Levinson, 2011). The Frankfurt School made a shift in focus from prior Marxist thought, from seeing the economy as the primary determiner of the superstructure to looking at how culture and intermediate social structures produce mystification. One Frankfurt School figure, Theodor Adorno, for example, posited the notion of the *culture industry* as the force by which the logic of capitalist institutions is rationalized and standardized (Darder, 2012). Elements of culture such as religion and, in contemporary contexts, popular media, serve to pacify the masses and prevent resistance (Levinson, 2011).

Another critical theorist from outside of the Frankfurt School who studied the means by which such pacification is possible is Antonio Gramsci. A leader in the Italian Communist Party, Gramsci's ideas were forged in his work as a political activist. He is now one of the most widely

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read political and cultural theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having been taken up by every field in the social sciences and humanities (Ives, 2004). Gramsci argued that the state and ruling elite maintain power not only through physical force (e.g., enforcement of laws), but through control of ideas and regulation of beliefs. This is achieved through *hegemony*, a Gramscian idea that is especially helpful in understanding the formation of beliefs and ideas within schools, as well as those formed outside of schools thus impeding alternative worldviews from forming within them. Whereas the Marxist notion of false consciousness explains why individuals may be mystified into holding views inconsistent with their own experiences, Gramsci's notion of hegemony helps explain why even large groups do so and often with some awareness of the inconsistency (Ives, 2004).

In seeking to understand how hegemony succeeds in fostering consent even from those dominated as a result of their consent, Gramsci (1971) put forth the idea of *contradictory consciousness.* Here he was referring to the contradiction between two sets of beliefs held simultaneously by what he called the "active man-in-the-mass" (p. 333). The first, which he called *common sense*, is different from our common usage of the term as practical wisdom. Instead Gramsci used the term to mean "thought that is common—common to a social group, or common to society as a whole" (Jones, 2006, p. 54). He described common sense to be beliefs, "superficially explicit or verbal, which [one] has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333), which means it is by nature unsystematic and incoherent. Although Gramsci was contemplating how a hegemonic bloc could shape the common sense of the popular masses, he affirmed that every social group has its common sense and that it is "continually transforming itself" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326).

By contrast, *good sense,* is the practical and empirical knowledge that may offer an alternative understanding of the world. Since good sense stems from lived experiences and therefore "has an affective or emotional aspect which is absent from abstract theorizing," (Jones, 2006, p. 55), it was important for Gramsci to merge this worldly good sense with philosophic understandings. Thus education should reveal to people the ways that their worldly experiences are connected to social structures and theories. Gramci's notion of contradictory consciousness thus differed from Engels's and Lukác's definitions of false consciousness in that Gramsci believed the oppressed have some level of awareness of their own domination (Levinson, 2011). It is important to note that he also asserted that contradictory consciousness affects us all, as we are all "of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 324). Freire (1970) too recognized "the duality of the oppressed: they are contradictory, divided beings, shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression and violence" (p. 55).

**Hegemony.** Prior to Gramsci, the term hegemony was used to refer to the dominance or authority of one nation-state over others. Gramsci was also familiar with the use of the term by linguists as a synonym for the prestige that results in one social group adopting the linguistic forms of another group. Gramsci redefined hegemony to mean "the formation and organization of consent" (Ives, 2004, p. 2), although his theorization of the concept is more complicated. He was interested in understanding why entire groups would accept and sometimes even actively support institutions that undermine their interests, in his case Italian fascism rather than communism. In 2016, the concept is useful for understanding why millions of poor, middle, and working class Americans support neoliberal political and economic policies that disadvantage them. It can be equally useful in understanding why women internalize sexist beliefs and people

of color consent to racist policies. For these reasons, the concept of hegemony continues to have wide-reaching appeal to scholars in a variety of disciplines.

Usage of the term by readers of Gramsci, however, has not been consistent. In fact, Gramsci's writings in general have been subject to multiple interpretations, in part due to his preference for avoiding creating new terms in favor of re-using old terms in new ways. This decision was in line with his political opposition to the imposition of a new language on groups, particularly on the rural peasants of southern Italy (Ives, 2004). Today the most common definition of hegemony, and the one used by many critical education scholars, is the "ability of the state and the ruling class to regulate beliefs within civil society" (Smith & Riley, 2009, p. 36), which is accomplished through consent of the dominated and then coercion if necessary. Critical pedagogy scholar Henry Giroux (1981) defined hegemony as:

> a form of ideological control in which dominant beliefs, values, and social practices are produced and distributed throughout a whole range of institutions such as schools, the family, mass media, and trade unions. (p. 94)

An important characteristic of this understanding of hegemony is that subordinate social groups, through mystification and false consciousness perpetuated by ideology, fail to see that the beliefs they ascribe to are keeping them subordinate. Shared opposition to these subordinating beliefs has been referred to as *counterhegemony*. However, Gramsci never used this term (Ives, 2004). The reason Gramsci did not use counterhegemony is that, for him, hegemony is not always in the service of the dominant group. Subordinate groups can also use hegemony to win consent as they attempt to gain power.

**Progressive and regressive hegemony.** It is clear then, that Gramsci, saw hegemony as being potentially negative or positive, depending on how and for what purposes it is used. It could be used positively, or progressively, as a means by which subordinated groups could attain

power through organized consent. It could also be used negatively, or regressively, as a means by which dominant groups control the masses through coercion and passive or even active consent. Although most critical education scholars have conceived of hegemony as the latter, at least one education scholar, Jim Trier (personal communication) has wondered if the progressive form of hegemony might serve well as an analytical tool for understanding the ways in which education can organize consent in order to transform society. Marginalized groups would attain power as a "result of organic intellectuals working from within 'common sense' to create culture, a world-view and institutions that integrate and organize diverse ways of understanding the world" (Ives, 2004, p. 100). Support for such an idea can be found in the theoretical and empirical work on resistance in schools.

**Hegemony and Resistance in Schools**

Some have critiqued the notion that the superstructure (institutions) and schools in particular reinforce and reproduce the dominant social order without opposition from the individuals within these institutions. In response to these critiques, Paul Willis, Henry Giroux, and others developed *theories of resistance*. Willis's (1977) seminal study of working class "lads" in England contended that these young men exercised their agency by resisting the intellectual pursuits of school in favor of manual labor that would better preserve their masculinity and self-worth. This however actually sustained their own social immobility by confining them to the working class. Giroux (1983), in seeking to understand how agents might challenge the repressive and reproductive forces of schools, argued that we must examine the "complex and creative fields of resistance through which class- race- and gender-mediated practices often refuse, reject, and dismiss the central messages of the schools" (p. 260). In this

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view, schools are somewhat independent of the capitalist market economy and can actually be a source of contradiction and opposition against dominant interests.

Thus resistance theories facilitated a whole new line of questions about the ways in which students and teachers can actually critique and oppose the reproductive nature of schools and society. Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) created a typology of four types of student resistance/reactionary behavior, using a Latino Critical Race (LatCrit) framework and analysis of two Chicana/o student resistance movements to inform their theory. These four types are: (a) reactionary behavior, (b) self-defeating resistance, (c) conformist resistance, and (d) transformational resistance (p. 316). Reactionary behavior, which may take the form of skipping school or challenging the teacher solely for entertainment purposes, does not qualify as resistance because it lacks a critique of social oppression. Self-defeating resistance characterizes Willis's (1977) lads in that they have some critique of social conditions but are not motivated by social justice and wind up re-creating the conditions of oppression. Conformist resistance occurs when students are motivated by social justice but do not challenge existing social systems. They may have a more liberal view that it is the individual's fault if he or she does not succeed and thus address social problems like high drop-out rates with individualistic solutions such as tutoring or counseling. Finally, transformative resistance pairs critiques of oppression with a desire for social justice, resulting in the greatest potential to effect social change (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This final type of resistance is the aim of critical pedagogy and therefore something I hoped to see in my observations of the two classrooms studied here. Before elaborating on critical pedagogy, I will first describe a few of the prominent theoretical traditions that have influenced critical theory and been influenced by critical theory, including critical race theory, critical feminism, and postcolonial theory. All of these are helpful in understanding how

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critical teachers in diverse classrooms may address issues of racism, sexism, xenophobia, nativism, and American exceptionalism.

**Intellectual Movements with Influences on and from Critical Theory**

    **Critical Race Theory.** Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in part to respond to the insufficiency of Marxist, neo-Marxist, and other social theories to adequately explain the persistence and ubiquitousness of racism as an oppressive force that cannot be explained by, much less reduced to, class oppression (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). CRT has origins in history, law, critical social theory, and pragmatism, among others, and can be "seen as both a historical movement and a philosophical orientation that recognizes the centrality and permanence of racism in the United States" (Levinson, 2011, p. 201). Postmodern perspectives have called into question the usefulness of race as a category, arguing that its socially constructed nature results in epistemological limitations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). However the reification of race produces material consequences for people of color and thus cannot be dismissed purely based on the fact that there is no biological or natural basis for racial categorizations.

    CRT scholars have made great strides in theorizing race and providing tools that can be used to understand how racism operates in society as well as particular social institutions, such as schools. Here I will briefly summarize some of the tenets of CRT in education as explained by Solórzano and Yosso (2001). One is the acknowledgement that racism is institutionalized (rather than a personality flaw within individuals, as it is often perceived) and, though it intersects with other forms of subordination such as sexism and class oppression, it cannot be explained solely by these. The second is that CRT challenges dominant ideologies perpetuated in schools such as "objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity," which "act as

a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society"
(Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, pp. 472-473). CRT is also committed to social justice and the naming
of one's own reality through methods such as storytelling, counternarratives, *testimonios,* family
histories*,* revisionist histories, poetry, and others (Cervantes-Soon, 2012; Ladson-Billings &
Tate, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In these ways, CRT has provided valuable tools for
teachers wishing to help students understand and challenge racism.

      **Critical feminisms.**  Feminist theories have a long and complex history, so in the
interests of space, I will here briefly identify a few of the overlapping elements of critical theory
and feminist theories that are specifically relevant to this dissertation. At the most basic level, an
interest in student critical consciousness entails consciousness of all of the oppressive structures
in society, including racism, sexism, classism, and so forth, as well as their intersections.
Feminist scholars have highlighted the ways in which sexism continues to operate, even while
women in the US make gains in areas such as access to wider career options, higher salaries, and
greater autonomy. Their work has highlighted how sexism serves as a prime example of the ways
in which culture and ideology can obscure oppressive forces in order to secure consent from the
oppressed. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) explained this well:

> In order to understand how the pervasiveness of violence against women, and violence
> against women of Color, poor women, and women with disabilities in particular,
> becomes so normalized as to be virtually invisible, one must practice seeing the
> interconnections between socialization, institutions, and culture. (p. 82)

In addition, just as the institutional nature of racism is denied through individualistic
rationalizations such as pointing to examples of successful people of color as evidence that
racism no longer exists, the structural constraints of sexism get denied through pointing to
women's suffrage or the protections against violence that American women have when
compared to women in more repressive countries. The hidden nature of institutional sexism thus

prevents many people from recognizing and opposing how women continue to be reduced to

their appearance (Langton, 2009), among other problematic effects of sexism. For instance, the

idea that a woman's value is directly related to her attractiveness to men continues to be

normalized in American society through mainstream media such as music videos, movies, and

advertising (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Again the dominant ideology of liberal individualism

explains away this objectification through arguments that women have a choice whether or not to

participate in the production or consumption of these media. Gramsci's notions of contradictory

consciousness and hegemony through consent, however, help explain why women would

participate in their own objectification even while they also may wish for an end to patriarchy.

This is just one example of the many manifestations of sexism in the contemporary US and one

way in which a critical theory analysis of culture can help explain its durability and invisibility.

**Postcolonial theory**. A final field related to critical theory and relevant to critical

pedagogy, particularly within social studies, is postcolonial theory. It too encompasses a

complex body of work from a variety of fields, so for the purposes of this dissertation I will

focus on how it has been used by anti-colonial educators in alignment with the aims of critical

consciousness raising. Kincheloe, a social studies educator and critical pedagogy scholar, argued,

> critical teachers need to view their work in the context of living and working in a nation
> state with the most powerful military industrial complex in history. It is a complex that
> has shamefully used the monist agenda fueled by corporate accumulation by means of
> force. Indeed, the war on terror is a cloaking divide to hide broader, imperialistic
> political and economic goals. (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 40)

Thus a postcolonial analysis of the current global social order supports consciousness raising in

that the "ethnocentric global hegemony of Western/Enlightenment humanism is key to an

understanding of the unequal distribution, value, wealth, and labor among different social

groups" (Andreotti, 2011, p. 5). This can apply not only to comparisons between social groups in

colonizing and colonized countries, but also social groups within the same nation state through *internal colonialism*. Among populations residing within the same borders, particularly in the US, "there continues to be a structured relationship of cultural, political, and economic domination and subordination between European whites on the one hand, and indigenous and non-white peoples on the other" (Tejeda, Espinoza, & Gutiérrez, 2003, p. 11). Thus the concept of internal colonialism is also helpful in raising consciousness regarding how racism and nativism are reproduced in our postcolonial context, also through dominant ideologies and hegemony.

These are just a few of the many theoretical traditions related to critical theory. Other discourses that share a similar interest in power, positionality, and language include postmodernism, poststructuralism, cultural studies, and queer theory, among others (Segall, 2013). Beginning with Marx's interest in the origins of social inequities and particularly his notion of reification to explain how certain social constructions, such as class, come to be seen as natural and neutral, these discourses have analyzed other ways in which "knowing, subjectivity, identity, and voice are constructed" (Segall, 2013, p. 478). I have highlighted the three examples of CRT, critical feminism, and postcolonial theory, as these particularly relate to the critical pedagogies of these two history teachers as well as my own analysis of the classrooms observed. In future work, I hope to explore how other traditions may further enhance critical pedagogy and student consciousness-raising, as well as additional ways in which these three can be illuminating in these regards.

**Critical Pedagogy: The Theory**

Critical pedagogy has its origins in the critical theories of Marx, the Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci, and many others (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009). Brazilian theorist Paolo

Freire transformed the field of education and influenced countless teachers, researchers, and

scholars in other fields such as philosophy, political science, theology, and literary theory

(Kincheloe, 2008). His concepts of the *banking model* of education, and its counterparts,

*dialogics* and *problem-posing methodology* resonated with educators striving for social justice

and resisting domination. This section will briefly describe these and other origins of critical

pedagogy, while the next section argues for the need for critical pedagogy in history classrooms.

  **Origins and aims of critical pedagogy.** Freire's seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

(1970) analyzed liberation and proposed how it might be achieved. He argued that it can only be

achieved by the oppressed because "the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he

dehumanizes others, is unable to lead this struggle" (p. 47); however the oppressor can work in

solidarity with the oppressed. Liberation can only be achieved, Freire argued, through "a

humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship

of dialogue with the oppressed" (p. 68). Freire went on to outline the characteristics of this

humanizing, revolutionary pedagogy.

  First, it cannot be the common banking form in which "the teacher issues communiqués

and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (p. 72) because

students will then passively accept the world, rather than transform it. Rather, students'

*conscientization* (or critical consciousness) must be raised through dialogical relations with the

teacher. This allows the teacher's authority to be *dialectical* with the students' authority:

> as teachers relinquish the authority of truth providers, they assume the mature authority
> of facilitators of student inquiry and problem posing. In relation to such teacher authority,
> students gain their freedom—they gain the ability to become self-directed human beings
> capable of producing their own knowledge. (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 17)

A helpful definition of conscientization, from the editors of *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, is

"the process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the

social realities which shape their lives and discover their own capacities to recreate them" (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 14). Some of these realities include social practices--"what people say and do," social forms—"the principles that provide and give legitimacy to specific social practices," and social structures—"constraints that limit individual life and appear to be beyond the individual's control, having their sources in the power relations that govern society" (McLaren, 2009, p. 67). In other words, conscientization facilitates students' growing awareness of the often hidden ways in which power shapes everything from schooling to culture to what counts as knowledge in our society.

Second, Freire specified that dialogue to transform the world must be entered with love, humility, faith, trust, hope, and critical thinking. This inclusion of love, faith, and hope is particularly important for addressing the fear that critical pedagogy gives students a negative impression of society or a sense of helplessness to change it. Freire instead championed a hopeful perspective that society was constructed by humans and therefore can be reconstructed by humans (Kincheloe, 2008). Finally, Freire argued that both teachers and students must pair their actions with reflection. Freire termed this *praxis*. Through praxis and dialogue, Freire believed that students would learn to read the world and thereby learn to transform it.

North American scholars such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor, Stanley Aronowitz, and others, were simultaneously arguing for critical pedagogies that could radically change the nature of public schooling and ultimately lessen oppression. One of their central premises is that formal education, and thus teaching, is inherently political. Giroux (1983) viewed schools as "agencies of cultural and social reproduction" in that "they legitimate capitalist rationality and sustain dominant social practices" (p. 258). Thus teachers must be aware that what they may perceive to be neutral instruction is actually supporting the dominant

social order and reproducing the same stratifications that exist in wider society. Critical

pedagogy attempts to disrupt this reproductive function of schooling.

**Critical pedagogy and hegemony.** For students to acquire conscientization of the social

forces that maintain and reproduce inequities, they need an understanding of hegemony

(McLaren, 2009). As mentioned previously, hegemony can be progressive or regressive.

Referring to regressive hegemony, Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) argued

> "understanding how hegemony functions in society provides critical educators with the
> basis for understanding not only how the seeds of domination are produced, but also how
> they can be challenged and overcome through resistance, critique, and social action." (p.
> 12)

While some scholars such as Giroux and McLaren (1987) have thus advocated

counterhegemonic teaching, given that Gramsci's theory included a progressive hegemony for

dismantling oppression, it seems this may offer the alternative education scholars are seeking.

Gramsci saw progressive hegemony, or "moral and intellectual leadership" (Jones, 2006, p. 61)

as the means by which the transformation of society could occur:

> The working class, he writes, can only 'become the leading and the dominant [i.e.
> hegemonic] class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances
> which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and
> the bourgeois State' (Gramsci 1994: 320). (as cited in Jones, 2006, p. 58)

Based on this usage of hegemony, the term counterhegemony would suggest something *against*

forming class alliances through consent. Instead, it may be more helpful to consider how

education might contribute to a progressive hegemony in which subordinate groups mobilize

against oppressive structures[5].

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[5] To address those critics who contend that classroom power structures cannot be altered
significantly enough to allow true liberation, I offer a complete consideration of the critiques and
possibilities of critical pedagogy in a subsequent section.

**Critical pedagogy in multicultural social studies classrooms.** Social studies classes such as U.S. History are well suited for critical pedagogy. Because a crucial element of critical pedagogy is the *historicity of knowledge,* Darder (2012) argued, "the study of history, which has deteriorated at all levels of schooling, must be elevated to a position of critical influence" (p. 84). Giroux (1983) argued that in the absence of an understanding of the historical antecedents to the current social order, the social order is perceived to be inevitable or invariable. This represents one problem with a common approach to social studies—as *citizenship transmission* (Barth & Shermis, 1970). Teaching for citizenship transmission involves persuading students that the nation's current systems of democracy and capitalism are the best, which means that any unfortunate historical episodes such as slavery or displacement of Native Americans must have been an inevitable "price to pay for 'progress'" (Barth & Shermis, 1970, p. 745). While such an approach to social studies may (or may not, in the case of critically conscious students) successfully indoctrinate students to be loyal and obedient members of the state, Darder (2012) argued,

> instead of orienting the curriculum to a patriotic purpose that stresses the role of great men in shaping our contemporary world, or featuring events whose meaning is usually lost to students, teachers should assist students in understanding history as a social process—a process that incorporates both the participation of social movements and the state, as well as the economic and cultural forces acting as significant determinants in society. Further, since historical events often conceal more than they reveal, a critical historical understanding is also closely predicated on deconstructing events, texts, and images of the past. (p. 84)

In this way critical pedagogy can help students see that current inequalities are not inevitable and understand the social forces that have shaped these current conditions.

To achieve these ends, critical pedagogy must build on the students' own histories and ways of making meaning of the world. Based on these tenets of critical pedagogy, Darder (2012)

outlined a theory of *critical bicultural pedagogy* to meet the needs of working-class racialized

students. This pedagogy must:

> 1. be built on a theory of cultural democracy;
> 2. support a dialectical, contextual view of the world;
> 3. recognize forms of cultural invasion;
> 4. use dialogue to allow for students of color to find their voice and to critique and transform the world;
> 5. address the political nature of schooling, as well as power in society;
> 6. be dedicated to the empowerment of all people and beings.  (p. 102)

The emphasis on democracy, dialogue, power, and a dialectical view of the world are derived

from Freirean critical pedagogy. Darder's framework is helpful for imagining a critical pedagogy

that can be used in multicultural classrooms because it is additive (Valenzuela, 1999), culturally

relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) in the sense that

nondominant heritage cultures are not only maintained, but also treated as valid and valuable

sources of knowledge. For example, within social studies classrooms, teachers can enact additive

pedagogy by having transnational students undertake a comparative study between the

governments of their heritage countries and the U.S. government (Hilburn, 2015).

Overall however, social studies education, and history instruction in particular, have been

largely unaffected by the insights of critical theories (Segall, 1999). They are still taught

primarily from the perennialist and essentialist perspectives that there is a certain body of

knowledge students must acquire to be loyal, obedient citizens and/or to be economically

productive members of society (Gaudelli, 2002). Attempts to teach otherwise are met with fierce

resistance, such as the Republican National Convention's (2014) resolution to overhaul the

revised Advanced Placement U.S. History curriculum because it "emphasizes negative aspects of

our nation's history while omitting or minimizing positive aspects" (p. 1). Students, however,

have protested in response to these attempts at whitewashing the curricula and favoring national

allegiance over truth (Fischer, 2005; Paul, 2014). These protests suggest that students are not only longing for a more critical social studies education; they are also suspicious of attempts to deny them this. Critical pedagogy is particularly crucial in history education if students are to confront the social problems they face now and will face later, through understanding the ways knowledge and the social world are constructed through dominant discourses. The study of history thus "requires contestation, deconstruction, and action, not passivity, blind acceptance, and retention" (Segall, 1999, p. 371).

As suggested by Segall (1999), critical pedagogy requires more than deconstruction and understanding, however; action is also needed. Students must begin to imagine and enact possibilities for changing society. Peter McLaren, in his book *Capitalists and Conquerors: A Critical Pedagogy against Empire* (2005)*,* argued:

> any institution worthy of the appellation 'school' must educate students to become active agents for social transformation and critical citizenship. . . This is an urgent task because the important challenge ahead is to educate a citizenry capable of overcoming the systemic exploitation of so many of the world's populations. (p. 105)

Citizenship education in particular, then, is a key component of critical pedagogy and a task that is often perceived as the responsibility of social studies educators (Hickey, 2002). But citizenship education, like the other elements of socials studies education, typically takes the form of "the same patriotic, Eurocentric narrative that has been taught since the nation's founding" despite the fact that this narrative "does not speak for a large percentage of those currently living in the United States, nor does it adequately prepare students to live in a society characterized by increased diversity, immigration, and pluralism" (Journell, 2011, p. 11).

Schools tend to teach a civic republican form of citizenship education, which emphasizes rights, responsibilities, and identification with dominant notions of American culture and history (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). This approach reproduces the social order by ensuring that a

majority of students "are educated for check-out lines and voting booths, while only a few are educated for board rooms and legislatures" (Parker, 1996, p. 107). There is also an insinuation that to be "American" is to adopt White identities (Pérez Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez & Solórzano, 2008; Urrieta, 2004). It should not be surprising, then, that many youth perceive such curricula as at odds with their own experiences (Rubin, 2007), and do not see how they can participate in this non-inclusive political process (Niemi & Niemi, 2007) or how their participation would matter (Levinson, 2012).

Moreover, interest in political issues and voting among American young people is declining (CIRCLE, 2003). There is also a large disparity in political efficacy and engagement, or a "civic empowerment gap" (Levinson, 2012, p. 31), between middle/upper-class White students and poor students and Students of Color. This gap persists into adulthood, where people earning $75,000 or more are six times more likely to be politically involved than those earning under $15,000 (p. 34). This gap is much greater than it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it is about three times higher than it is in European, Asian, and North and South American countries (Levinson, 2012). Such a gap undermines democracy because "the legitimacy, stability, and quality of democratic regimes are all directly dependent on the robust participation of a representative and large cross-section of citizens" (p. 48).

Research suggests, however, that acknowledgment of contemporary injustices can actually increase civic engagement among youth in general and youth in marginalized groups in particular (Rubin, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), although such discussions may also need to be accompanied by fostering a sense of solidarity (Levinson, 2012). Youth may be more interested in citizenship education that acknowledges injustices, particularly if these youth have experienced injustices firsthand and therefore distrust attempts to present citizenship as universal

and unifying. As a result, citizenship education needs to be "problematized and reconstructed" (Giroux, 2005, p. 6) for our current and future generations of culturally diverse and transnational students.

   ***Critical pedagogy for democratic citizenship***. In aiming for a more democratic and egalitarian society, critical pedagogy places emphasis on preparing students to improve the quality of our democracy through their own civic participation. However civic education in schools has traditionally focused more on the facts of political processes and individual rights than it has on the systemic changes needed to enhance democracy (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). In response to this disconnect, as well as the discrepancy between the lived experiences of many American youth and the narrative that the US is the beacon of democracy, there is a growing body of research on critical forms of citizenship education (Andreotti, 2011; Johnson & Morris, 2010). Johnson and Morris's (2010) framework of critical citizenship draws on principles of critical pedagogy and includes "skills in acting collectively to change the status quo," which have been overlooked in favor of individualistic and conventional forms of participation such as voting and letter writing. Critical citizenship also includes skills in "dialogue," "independent critical thinking," and "critical interpretation of others' viewpoints" (Johnson & Morris, 2010, p. 90). In classrooms where teachers stifle student opinions and debate, and present their own opinions without opportunities for students to question them or even recognize them as opinions, rather than facts, students have limited potential for developing any of the skills listed. Critical citizenship education instead would help students develop the ability to identify ways to improve the political process as well as the beliefs that change is possible and that they can effect it (Levinson, 2012). One component of this dissertation, then, is to investigate how critical approaches to social studies education may develop students' critical citizenship skills of

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identifying political and social changes needed and developing a sense of efficacy that they can contribute to these changes.

**Critical Pedagogy: Critiques and Possibilities**

Critical pedagogy has been criticized for its overly theoretical nature and the specialized, abstract language used by its proponents (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). Hytten and Bettez contended that this may explain why it is not more explicitly utilized in the broader field of social justice in education. Indeed a search of literature on "social justice" and education yields far more results (1,150,000 in Google Scholar) than a search of literature on "critical pedagogy" and education (55,200 in Google Scholar). A search through the ERIC database similarly yields fewer research articles on critical pedagogy than on social justice.

Another line of critique of critical pedagogy is that it treats race as an epiphenomenon of class (see Jennings & Lynn, 2005 for one example). Freire responded to these critiques by saying that, although he was preoccupied with class in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he never intended to ignore race and has always worked against all forms of oppression, including racial (Au, 2011). In keeping with this view and aim, I take the position in this study that oppression in the US cannot be explained by one power structure, not even class. I also concur with Solórzano and Yosso's (2005) assertion that race, class, and gender intersect with one another in ways that make it impossible to analyze any of these in isolation from the others.

In a widely-cited article in *Harvard Educational Review,* feminist scholar Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) critiqued critical theory for its rationalist assumptions and the fact that proponents use the code word "critical" to stand in for the more specific but politically charged descriptors they mean, such as anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist, anti-ableist, anti-classist and so forth. In this study, I use the term critical not to hide these pedagogical goals, but rather

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specifically to refer to all of them at once. In the literature Ellsworth reviewed, she also found

that discussions of classroom practices were stripped of "historical contexts and political

position" (p. 300). My intention is to preserve these contexts and positionings in my discussions

of the classrooms analyzed here.

Despite the criticisms, I believe that teaching practices can greatly benefit from the

extensive theoretical work done in critical pedagogy over the last 45 years. This body of

knowledge does offer guidance embedded within its abstract depictions of oppression and power,

although the authors are typically careful not to be prescriptive given that contexts should always

be taken into account. Furthermore, critical pedagogy is not a pie in the sky that can only be

practiced by academics with the ability to decode its theoretical language. My view of critical

pedagogy aligns with that of Fischman and Haas (2009) who acknowledged that it is less of an

ideal endpoint than it is an orientation, a commitment to a path along which there will inevitably

be stumbling blocks and detours:

> The committed intellectual is more of an orientation or a process than a final state of
> being, and perhaps more importantly, commitment likely precedes or at least develops
> with conscientization (Fischman & McLaren, 2005). Thus, the teaching of critical
> pedagogy should begin here as well . . . an educator who is a committed intellectual is
> sometimes critically self-conscious and actively engaged in social networks, but at other
> times is confused, or even unaware of his or her limitations or capacities to be an active
> proponent of social change. They will continue to be both oppressed and oppressor, even
> as they struggle to become less of both. (p. 571)

Furthermore, I agree with Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) who argued, "erroneously,

people have looked to theory to build theory instead of understanding that critical pedagogy

began with practice to build theory" (p. 105). In other words, more research is needed on the

practices of critical pedagogy to help not only suggest directions for practitioners, but also to

further develop the theory. The next section will briefly outline the few empirical studies of

critical pedagogy practices before identifying the gaps this study hopes to address in order to

both propose possibilities for practice as well as considerations for further theorization of critical pedagogy.

**Critical Pedagogy in Classrooms: A Review of the Limited Extant Literature**

The majority of the literature on critical pedagogy is conceptual (e.g. Breunig, 2005; Freire, 1970, 1998; Giroux, 1983, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2015; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). The problem with this is that "the ways in which critical practice is produced in real schools are much more complex than the ways that critical theories of schooling are elaborated in the academy" (Niesz, 2006, p. 343). Of the relatively small amount of empirical literature on implementation of critical pedagogy, most has focused on its use within teacher education (Harman & McClure, 2011; Helmer, 2014; Huerta-Charles, 2007) or adult education more broadly (Bartlett, 2005; Kaufmann, 2010), or its use in spaces outside of the classroom such as in Gay-Straight Alliances (Mayo, 2013), or local communities resisting global capitalism (Téllez, 2006).

Due to "Freire's emphasis on local contextualization as a vital element for his methods, which contrasts with the need to emancipate huge numbers of people from oppression," there has been a "predominance within critical pedagogy of either small local projects, or theoretical/analytical studies" (Johnson & Morris, p. 2010, p. 82). Therefore, ethnographic studies of critical pedagogy in K-12 classrooms have tended to focus on particular projects such as scripting of telenovelas (Medina & Costa, 2013) or engagement with other forms of popular media (Leard & Lashua, 2006) such as hip hop (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Stovall, 2006). Others have studied critical pedagogies for specific groups of students such as Native American (McCarty & Lee, 2014), African-American (Ladson-Billings, 2009), and language minority students (Nieto, 2009). Of the empirical studies on critical pedagogy more broadly,

much has used interviews to gain knowledge of pre-service and practicing teachers' ideas about

critical pedagogy (e.g., Katz, 2014) rather than observational data in classrooms or interviews

with students. García-González (2000) did actually conduct observations along with teacher

interviews, but her research question focused solely on teachers' beliefs and practices, not on

how students responded. As Katz (2014) argued in reference to her own research, "learning more

about students' experiences with critical pedagogy would be a worthwhile next step in this

research" (p. 2).

Other scholars have paired data on teacher approaches with data on student responses.

Gilbert (2011), for example, did so in his comparative study of two science educators assigned to

teach "lower-track" science courses. One used traditional, lecture-based approaches, while the

other used critical science education, which is grounded in critical theories, multicultural

education, and feminist thought. Gilbert (2011) found that students in the first class viewed the

pedagogy as "watered-down" (p. 414) and alienating, while students in the second class reported

they came to better understand the content and found the classroom context "respectful and

intellectually challenging" (p. 414). The data analysis primarily centered on how students

interpreted their teachers' pedagogy, rather than how they developed critical consciousness.

Liou and Antrop-González (2011) conducted a self-study of their use of critical race

pedagogy in an urban classroom comprised predominantly of Students of Color. They taught

students the concept of critical race theory, guided the students to apply it to their own

experiences with education and in their communities, and finally had students create final action

project based on what they had learned. They found that "the process toward Freire's definition

of critical consciousness is not linearly cultivated and does not have a strict defining moment" (p.

267). This study offered some insight into the possibilities of a specific form of critical

pedagogy: critical race pedagogy; however, the breadth and depth of their discussions on teaching approaches and student responses were limited.

The most extensive publication on critical pedagogy based on empirical research is Jeff Duncan-Andrade and Ernesto Morrell's (2008) book, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy: Possibilities for Moving from Theory to Practice in Urban Schools*. In it, the authors describe the various ways they have implemented the principles of critical pedagogy over twelve years while teaching at urban high schools in the Bay Area of California. Their stated goal was to develop a grounded theory of practice, in other words, "a theory that begins with the core principles of critical pedagogy but uses empirical data from theoretically informed practice to develop a more nuance and particular theory of critical pedagogy as it applies to urban education in new-century schools" (p. 49). To inform this theory, they used multi-year projects they conducted as English teachers, as basketball coaches, in a college access program for Students of Color, and in a summer seminar for youth participatory action research. From these projects, they proposed the following core principles of critical pedagogy:

1. Educators should explicitly tell students the form their critical pedagogy is taking (e.g., critical media literacy, youth participatory action research, etc.) and how it is culturally, personally, and intellectually relevant to students. It should also build on student knowledge and provide access to the discourses of dominant institutions.

2. Educators should create a "critical counterculture" by challenging local contexts of exploitation, connecting these to larger national and global struggles, and replacing them with "a culture of excellence and justice" (p. 172).

3. Educators should provide opportunities for students to create goals that address the material conditions of their lives and implement plans to collectively address these.

4. Finally, educators should help students reflect on what they learn and generate ideas

for advancing their work, such as through building smaller projects into larger ones so

that students are motivated to continue their work toward social justice.

This extensively researched grounded theory of practice offers more specific guidance than much

of the theoretical literature on critical pedagogy. At the same time however, it seems most

relevant to teachers who are able to engage students in in-depth projects on relevant local issues

that will require much time and autonomy from the usual curriculum. Teachers of elective or arts

classes and leaders of extra-curricular programs may have the easiest time implementing these

principles, but teachers of science, math, and social studies may struggle to adapt them to classes

with more prescriptive content standards. Thus more research is needed that studies how teachers

within these disciplines are able to reflect the principles of critical pedagogy.

In terms of social studies education or history classes specifically, there is little empirical

research in classrooms on the use of critical pedagogy to develop students' critical consciousness.

The only one I was able to find was David Stovall's (2006) study of self-led critical hip hop

pedagogy workshops in a Chicago high school. The workshops took place in a class called

Society and Social Inequalities and used hip hop lyrics to address historical and social contexts

of issues related to the students' lives outside of school. His article focused primarily on how he

selected and presented the chosen songs to students, the comments they made in class

discussions and connections they made to literature read in class, and finally their overall

opinions of the workshops. There is little information on the students' conscientization during or

after the projects.

Not all empirical classroom research has served to imagine and present possibilities for

critical pedagogy in practice. Neisz (2006), for example, used ethnographic data from two

classrooms to analyze the ways in which the subjectivities of educators shaped their interpretations of critical theories. She found that, although their methods aligned with critical pedagogy in some ways, the teachers did not reflect the social critique that accompanies critical education theories.

This study seeks to expand the body of literature on critical pedagogy in three ways. First, it responds to the critics of critical pedagogy who fear it is too abstract, too theoretical, and too disconnected from the everyday happenings of classrooms to feasibly guide teachers' practices. By presenting data from classrooms within two public schools in which elements of critical pedagogy, in some form, are visible, I hope to contribute to the conversation on what critical pedagogies might look like in actual public classroom settings. Second, very little research has illuminated students' responses to critical pedagogy. This study includes daily classroom observations combined with interviews with about a third of the students in each class in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of how critical pedagogy influences their thoughts and opinions about social justice, power, and American society. Finally, given the very limited research on implementations of critical pedagogy in social studies settings, this study will begin to address this much-needed area.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

This dissertation is a postcritical ethnography (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004) conducted in two urban U.S. history classrooms in the southeastern region of the United States. This chapter will first elaborate on how postcritical ethnography, which blurs the line between theory and method (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004, p. 3), shaped the particular research methods selected for this study. Consistent with this theoretical orientation, I will provide a reflexive description of my role, motivations, and limitations as the researcher. Next I will describe the context of the study and my rationales for the selection of site and participants. I will then outline the data collection and analysis procedures and return to postcritical ethnography to consider the ways in which these procedures facilitated nonexploitation and co-investigation. Finally I conclude with the limitations of the study.

## Postcritical Ethnography

Postcritical ethnography seems most appropriate for a study of teaching practices that are grounded in critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008) for several reasons. Critical pedagogy stems from critical theory, and critical ethnography has been described as "critical theory in action" (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004, p. 15). In other words, critical ethnography includes research practices that are grounded in the underlying tenets of critical theory. In addition, critical pedagogues acknowledge the inherently political nature of teaching (Kincheloe, 2008), and critical ethnographers acknowledge the inherently political nature of research (Adkins & Gunzenhauser, 1999). However, critical ethnography has been

criticized for its "silencing of polyphony, male domination, theoretical oversimplification of power relations, and Eurocentric notions of emancipation" (Noblit, 1999, p. 4). From the perspective of critical pedagogy, thematic investigation and education (which Freire viewed as "simply different moments of the same process" [1970, p. 109]) should be dialogic, reflexive, and done *with* others, rather than *to* or *for* them. This aligns well with the suggestions of postcritical ethnographers that our research ought to be tempered through self-reflexivity and nonexploitation (Gunzenhauser, 2004). Thus postcritical ethnography complements both critical theory and critical pedagogy in that it acknowledges participants as co-constructers of knowledge and commits to a critique of "self, interpretation, and representation" (Anders, 2012, p. 100). In this way, it reminds me to critique the ways that, despite my intentions, the study reflects Eurocentric ways of knowing and may contribute to the colonial project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Self-reflexivity requires turning the critique back on the analysis, the theory, and the researcher herself. This is necessary since "all research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 22). Self-reflexivity requires the researcher to consider the ethical and political implications of the knowledge claims made. Self-reflexivity in postcritical ethnography reminds me to unpack the implications of the fact that "the researcher is the main research instrument" (Grammes, 2010, p. 8). As Anders (2012) stressed, postcritical ethnographers should repeatedly ask themselves, "What role do I play in the telling of it and what responsibility do I have in the production of it?" as well as "How might I interpret this differently?" (p. 104). In other words, what other representations are possible? This offers one

means of turning the critique back on itself, by asking how the researcher's positioning, actions, and analysis might be critiqued.

**Researcher positionality and self-reflexivity.** Throughout the data collection, analysis, and representation process, I attempted interrogate my own positioning, actions, and interpretations. I will present my background, subjectivities, and interests here to assist the reader's interpretation of the study and to disclose my motivations and goals in undertaking this project.

While growing up, I spent perhaps more time than most people reflecting on my many privileges. My mother would tell me, "You know, we didn't do anything to deserve being born into a middle-class American family." Although colorblindness (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006) characterized family discourse, I nevertheless had a sense that the playing field is not even, and that it was only by chance that I happened to be at the easier end of it. I went into teaching, and later research, in the idealistic hopes of evening the field, in some small way.

I had some critical, anti-colonial sensibility, even before I knew what that was. I wanted to join Peace Corps, but not to teach English. At the time I could not articulate why, but now I know I felt resentful and resistant toward the global hegemony of English (Macedo, Dendrinos & Gounari, 2003). Later, I thought it was ridiculous that a school in the Dominican Republic had hired me to teach U.S. history and literature of all things, but I took the position anyway. To my surprise, the Dominican students wanted to learn U.S. history, mainly because many of them hoped to attend college in the United States. That seemed reasonable to me—after all, the superiority of American higher education was uncontested, or so I thought. Then one of my 12th graders, a brilliant writer and critical thinker named Alberto, told me he had no desire to apply to American schools and was frustrated that all of his friends derided Dominican universities. At

seventeen, he was able to see the cultural imperialism of the U.S. for what it was, an ability that I, his teacher and senior by five years (but also beneficiary of this imperialism), lacked.

And yet, sadly, I cannot say that I did a great job of teaching from a critical or anti-colonial perspective during the following five years I taught U.S. history at a public high school in New York City with a predominantly Dominican population. Yes, I was critical of early twentieth century U.S. interventions in Central America and the Caribbean, in part to honor my students' indignation at the violation of their countries' sovereignty. And like them, I was critical of the U.S. immigration policies at the time, in part because so many of my students rarely saw their mothers or fathers as a result of it. In other words, if I was operating under any sort of critical pedagogical framework, it stopped wherever my students' personal experiences ended. I wanted them to understand the historical origins of the social inequities they faced, such as the economic disparities between the U.S. and Dominican Republic, but I was not aware of critical pedagogy or how it could be used to facilitate this understanding. Since then I have wondered, if I had been more knowledgeable of neocolonialism, power, oppression, and the relations between these and culture and identity, would my students have achieved greater critical consciousness as a result? This study will not answer that question, but I hope it will begin to explore some possibilities.

I share these stories for several reasons. One is to admit that I am no expert on critical pedagogy in U.S. history classrooms; thus the study requires a methodology that acknowledges participants' role in knowledge construction. This is one reason postcritical ethnography appealed to me. Secondly, I share with my participants the struggles that accompany public school teaching in the U.S. in our era of accountability, privatization of schools, and de-professionalization (mechanization and technocratization) of the teaching profession (Apple, Au,

& Gandin, 2009). These shared experiences, as well as the shared desire to learn more about how we can develop our students' critical consciousness, may both help and hinder my analysis. It may have helped when our commonalities brought me closer to seeing through their eyes, and hindered analysis when the commonalities led me to assumptions or overconfidence in my interpretations of their words and actions.

Finally, I should make clear (if it is not already) that the interpretive paradigm that structures my research is critical (emancipatory), which holds that "the real world makes a material difference in terms of race, class, and gender" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 24). As a postcritical ethnographer, I acknowledge that my position is from an "activist stance" (Fine, 1994), in that I advocate for citizenship education that uncovers colonial underpinnings of contemporary social injustices, both to help marginalized students make sense of their experiences, and to problematize current power structures for dominant students. I tried to remain reflexive about this activist stance, however, to avoid imposing my opinions or convictions on my participants. As highlighted by Noblit, Flores, and Murillo (2004), "postcritical ethnographies require the interrogation of the power and politics of the critic himself/herself as well as in the social scene studied" (p. 19). Therefore, I interrogated how my background, my experiences as a history teacher, my privileged position as a researcher, and my activist stance influenced and limited my understanding (Noblit, 1999).

**Research Sites**

This ethnography was conducted in two public high schools in a midsized city in the Southeast I will refer to as Douglass. I wanted to study urban classrooms because this is the context I am most familiar with from my own teaching experiences, but also because some have suggested that critical pedagogy could develop urban students' skills in sociocultural and

political critique to confront their lived realities of poverty, racial segregation, poorly funded schools, higher crime rates, and other contributors to high dropout (or pushout) rates (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Urban youth also typically have less access to the political power needed to reverse these lived realities (Levinson, 2012; Stitzlein, 2014). Furthermore, their experiences with oppression may have already planted seeds of critical consciousness and skepticism toward the narratives of progress and equality traditionally presented in American History courses (Levinson, 2012).

**Schools.** The school sites were based on the teachers that I selected. Creekside High School[6] opened in 1955 and is a large, comprehensive public high school with a population of approximately 1,300 students. The racial demographics are 55% Black, 23% White, 18% Latin@, and 5% other. Females comprise 47% and males 53% of the population. As of 2015, 59% of students received free or reduced-price lunch. Students at Creekside High School typically took U.S. History during their 11th grade year and Civics the following year.

Health Academy is a public magnet school originally housed within a comprehensive high school before moving to its new campus in 2008. Students are offered courses and internships related to careers in health care. Of the approximately 400 students, approximately 61% are Black, 20% are Latin@, 9% are White, 6% are Asian and 3% other. Females comprise 76% of the population and males 24% of the population. As of 2013, 55% of students received free or reduced-price lunch. Students at Health Academy also took U.S. History during their 11th grade year, but they varied in whether they took Civics before or after that, due to a recent change in the state curriculum.

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[6] All school and participant names are pseudonyms. Participants were offered the opportunity to select their own pseudonyms. The only ones who did so were Melony, Isabel, Angela Davis, and Feisty Rebel.

The state had also just divided what had been one U.S. History course into two mandatory courses: American History I (which ends with the Civil War) and American History II (which begins with Reconstruction and extends to the present). I observed the American History II course of both teachers, which allowed me to see various possibilities for the teaching of similar content, such as the Great Depression, World War II, and the 1960s. I chose the American History II course mainly because it occurred during the semester in which the district allowed me to observe, but I also was particularly interested in how the teachers presented material on early 20th century imperialism, the Red Scare of the 1920s and later McCarthyism, social changes in the 1950s and 1960s, the US's interventions in Southeast Asia and later the Middle East, and 1980s conservatism, among others. Both schools were on block scheduling, meaning that each class period lasted 90 minutes and students took just four courses per semester.

**Participants**

   **Selection and recruitment.** I used purposeful sampling (Mertens, 2010) to identify and recruit two U.S. History teachers with the desire to raise their students' critical consciousness and a demonstrated ability to be culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and social justice oriented (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). In other words, these were teachers who promoted questioning of the status quo, acknowledged students as constructers of knowledge, and opposed discrimination in all its forms. I chose teachers who already demonstrated these commitments and capacities because by studying cases of exemplary pedagogy, we can provide models of wisdom that might guide other educators (Grammes, 2010). Through studying their perceptions and performances of a more critical form of education, I was able to better understand what this might look like in practice, and how it relates to the theoretical conceptions of critical pedagogy.

Furthermore, by selecting a course that presents U.S. history in a critical manner, I was able to explore the extent to which such teaching influences students' conscientization.

The other criterion that was important to me in selecting participants is that they be not only willing but also eager to participate in the study. Since postcritical ethnography is committed to nonexploitation (Gunzenhauser, 2004), I sought teachers who felt the research project could benefit them personally and professionally. I confirmed that both teachers felt this way because when I told them of my initial project idea they both were very excited about the prospect of participating. Specifically they were eager to learn more about their students' thoughts on critical pedagogy, to get feedback from a fellow social studies teacher, and to discuss ideas about education with me. After inviting the teachers to participate and receiving their acceptance, I obtained permission from both of their principals and the school district.

**Ms. Bowling.** Ms. Bowling was a White 28-year old woman and was born and raised in the town adjoining the city in which the study was conducted. She told both her class and me that when she was growing up her family sometimes struggled financially. However, she was able to attend college through working while taking courses, and ultimately earned her degree from the state's flagship institution. She was in her third year of teaching, all of them at Creekside High School, which is also where she completed her student teaching. Ms. Bowling's undergraduate major was economics, but through taking pre-requisite courses for the Master of Arts in Teaching program and teaching history for several years, her content knowledge of American history was on par with a history major. During the year of this ethnography she taught U.S History and Advanced Placement Economics, but in past years she had also taught Civics. I knew Ms. Bowling's teaching philosophies and practices very well from co-instructing her social studies teaching methods course and supervising her student teaching during her M.A.T.

program. During her first year of teaching after completing the program, I conducted ten participant observations of her class for a qualitative research class I was taking at the time.

From these two semesters of observation, I had seen that Ms. Bowling prioritized students' critical thinking development over their rote memorization of historical facts, and that she consistently pushed them to consider historical narratives from rarely-told perspectives. She also spent more time listening to students' comments than making her own, one way in which demonstrated avoidance of what Freire (1970) called the banking model, in which teachers attempt to deposit information into students' knowledge banks. For this dissertation, I selected her third period class to observe because she reported they were an engaged and energetic group who showed the potential for critical analytical skills. The class consisted of nine Black students, eight White students, and seven Latin@ students. The class had 13 females and 12 males.

**Ms. Ray.** Ms. Ray was a White, 24-year old woman who had grown up in the same state but in a town about 200 miles away from her current city. She had attended the same undergraduate institution as Ms. Bowling had, but her majors were History and Women's Studies. She completed her Masters of Arts in Teaching at a prestigious university located in the city where this study took place. At the time of the study, she was in her second year of teaching, both of them at Health Academy, and she taught U.S. History and Advanced Placement U.S. History. I met Ms. Ray two years prior to the study while teaching with her at a free college access program for low-income and predominantly ethnoracial minority students, which I will refer to as "College Connect"[7]. I identified her as appropriate for this research after seeing the critical media analysis course she developed and taught for that program, chaperoning the field

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[7] I also knew three of the students in Ms. Ray's class through College Connect, two of whom I interviewed for this project (Ida and Amina). The rest of the class saw that we had a pre-existing relationship so this may have helped me earn the other students' trust as well.

trip she designed to help students learn more about their community's history of civil rights activism, and through many conversations with her about her philosophies regarding teaching and social justice.

For this dissertation, I observed her fourth period because she recommended them as her most opinionated and curious class. The fourth period students 22 were Black (including one student whose heritage was Egyptian and Jamaican), three Latina, and three White. Representative of the school's demographics, the vast majority were female (22 versus 6 males). Ms. Ray told me that, within this class, three females identified as lesbian and one male identified as gay. Ms. Bowling did not offer this information and I did not ask, but I think it is important to include this information about Ms. Ray's students to give a sense of the inclusive atmosphere at Health Academy. Although many had entered the school with religious views condemning homosexuality, the majority of these became more open as a result of the tight-knit and affirming atmosphere within the small school (according to Ms. Ray). Table 1 summarizes details about the two teacher participants.

Table 1

*Teacher Participants*

| Teacher | School | Age | Degrees | Years teaching | Dates of formal interviews[b] | Duration of interviews |
|---------|--------|-----|---------|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Ms. Bowling | Creekside | 28 | B.A. Economics; M.A.T. | 3 | April 3 September 26 | 55 min 177 min |
| Ms. Ray | Health Academy | 24 | B.A. History & Women's Studies; M.A.T. | 2 | March 28 September 19 | 73 min 139 min |

**The students.** I interviewed seven students from each class (See Appendix B for interview protocols for both student and teacher interviews). Seeking diversity of perspectives, I invited students with a variety of ethnoracial backgrounds and attitudes towards American society, as demonstrated by their class comments. There were a few students I would like to have interviewed but who never turned in their signed consent forms. Table 2 provides details about the students interviewed. I strove to build trust with the students prior to interviewing by explaining the purpose of my study to the whole class, chatting casually with students during breaks and before class, assisting students during independent or group activities, and waiting until I had been observing several weeks before inviting students for interviews.

Table 2

*Students Interviewed*

| Student | Gender | Age | Religion | Race/Ethnicity/ Nationality[a] | Date of Interview[b] | Duration of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ms. Ray's Class, Health Academy High School (Public Magnet, grades 9-12) | | | | | | |
| 1. Amina | F | 16 | Muslim | Black American | April 1 | 50 min |
| 2. Melony | F | 16 | Christian | African American | April 2 | 43 min |
| 3. Ida | F | 17 | Christian | African American | April 2 | 31 min |
| 4. Josephine | F | 16 | Christian | Black/Afr. Amer. | April 6 | 33 min |
| 5. Diane | F | 17 | Christian | Black/Afr. Amer. | April 8 | 40 min |
| 6. Dolores | F | 16 | None | Hispanic | April 14 | 28 min |
| 7. William | M | 16 | Jehovah's Witness | White/U.S. citizen | April 29 | 38 min |
| Ms. Bowling's Class, Creekside High School (Public Comprehensive, grades 9-12) | | | | | | |
| 1. Kiya | F | 16 | Christian | Afr. Amer./Black | April 9 | 30 min |
| 2. Angela Davis | F | 16 | Theist | African American | April 13 | 45 min |
| 3. Isabel | F | 17 | *blank* | Amer./Dominican | April 15 | 40 min |
| 4. Alex | M | 17 | *blank* | Mexican | April 21 | 26 min |
| 5. Feisty Rebel | F | 16 | None | White/American | April 22 | 31 min |
| 6. Roman | M | 17 | Christian | Black/Native American | April 23 | 35 min |
| 7. Matt | M | 17 | Christian | White, American | April 28 | 33 min |

**Data Collection**

I used three types of data to inform the bulk of my analysis: classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews. I also gathered documents to triangulate (Arksey & Knight, 1999) and provide additional context when needed. These primarily consisted of teacher-created artifacts such as lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, teacher-created lecture videos (which Ms. Ray's students often watched as homework), and handouts. These were invaluable in analyzing the instructional decisions of the teachers, as well as in making sense of student statements during class. For instance, I was able to use the handout of the Black Panthers' Ten Point Program as a reference while analyzing students' ideas of which points are still needed today. I also wanted to gather student writing to inform my analysis of individuals' conscientization; however the district would not allow me to collect any identifiable student work. Therefore, on four occasions I asked the teachers to make de-identified copies of student work for me, only when the assignment was particularly relevant to my research, such as a warm-up question on the meaning of Langston Hughes' poem "A Dream Deferred." Since the documents were de-identified, I could only use them to gain a general idea of the class's responses, rather than any individual students' ideas.

**Classroom observations.** I conducted participant observations at both sites for ten weeks[8], observing each 90-minute class four to five days per week. (The days I did not observe were test days, field trips, snow days, etc.). Prolonged and persistent time in the field is one way

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[8] The school district did not permit me to stay longer.

to support the credibility of qualitative research (Mertens, 2010). I took extensive field notes throughout each class period, wrote daily summary commentaries, and wrote weekly analytic in-process memos in order to "guide and focus the collection of new data" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 123). I used no guide for these field notes, as

> choosing what to write down is . . . both intuitive, reflecting the ethnographer's changing sense of what might possibly be made interesting or important to future readers, and empathetic, reflecting the ethnographer's sense of what is interesting or important to the people he is observing. (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 14).

However, I was looking for instances of critical pedagogy and conscientization, so I highlighted these in my notes and transcripts. I also participated in class activities to the extent the teacher wanted me to, for instance circulating during group or independent activities to assist students as needed. This also allowed me to hear from students sitting at the far ends of the room from my usual location. I audio-recorded each class session and at the end of each day, transcribed the segments that were most relevant to my research. Table 3 provides details about students quoted from class observations but who were not interviewed.[9]

Table 3

*Students Quoted in Class Observations, but Not Interviewed*

| Student | Gender | Race/Ethnicity/ Nationality |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ms. Ray's Class, Creekside High School (Public Comprehensive, grades 9-12) | | |
| Fairington | F | Black |
| Tas'ia | F | Black |
| Maurice | M | Black |
| Kiara | F | Black |
| Dakota | F | Black |
| Ti'Viada | F | Black |
| Parker | F | Black |
| Michelle | F | White |

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[9] The students quoted had also signed consent forms, as had their parents, allowing me to audio record them.

| Ms. Bowling's Class, Health Academy (Public Magnet, grades 9-12) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jaia | F | Black |
| Lexa | F | Black |
| Jerry | M | Black |
| Julio | M | Mexican American |
| Steven | M | White |
| Gisel | F | Mexican American |
| Brice | M | White |

**Teacher interviews.** I conducted two types of interviews with both teachers. The first type consisted of daily informal interviews in which I asked follow-up questions about student comments that I could not hear or was unsure how to interpret, as well as the teachers' reflections and interpretations of the day's lesson, both in terms of their rationales behind particular decisions as well as initial analyses of student responses. These also served as opportunities for me to conduct member checking to enhance credibility (Mertens, 2010) in that I could ask the teachers to give me feedback on my initial interpretations. I recorded detailed field notes about these conversations.

I also conducted two in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each teacher, which I audio-recorded and transcribed. I conducted the first interview about halfway through the ten weeks of classroom observations. In these interviews, I asked the teacher about their goals and the instructional strategies they use to achieve these goals (see Appendix for the complete interview protocol). Ms. Bowling's interview lasted 55 minutes and Ms. Ray's 72 minutes. I conducted the second formal interview the following fall semester, after I had transcribed the student interviews and the teachers were no longer teaching the same students. During these interviews, I first asked the teachers to read their students' transcripts and think out loud any time they read something that surprised them or that seemed to be evidence that they were

achieving their pedagogical goals. I did so for the purposes of co-investigation, detailed further below. For the latter half of the second interview, I asked each teacher to what extent their students' transcripts showed critical consciousness development or cynicism. I also assked what limitations they perceived to raising critical consciousness, as well as follow-up questions from the first interviews. These follow-up questions varied between the two teachers as a result of differences in their first interview responses as well as in their pedagogies. Thus I wrote individual protocols for each teacher to maximize opportunities for them to elaborate on their particular past statements and actions. The second interview lasted 177 minutes for Ms. Bowling and 137 minutes for Ms. Ray.

**Student interviews.** I conducted one in-depth semi-structured interviews with seven students from each class. Each interview lasted between 25-50 minutes and was conducted in the library, an empty classroom, or the teachers' lounge during students' lunch periods. I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews. I also took field notes following each interview on the students' tone, demeanor, and any other information I gathered on our walks from the classroom to the interview sites and back. The questions focused on students' opinions about the U.S. in general as well as about the U.S. government, policy decisions, and social conditions in particular. I followed these with prompts about whether their U.S. history class has had any influence on their opinions. I also asked their definition of citizenship and whether they would consider themselves patriotic. (The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix B).

**Data Analysis**

Although one of my research questions focused on pedagogy and the other on students' responses, I treated the classroom—rather than the teachers and students—as my unit of analysis. This was partially in response to Freire's (1970) warning against "treating the people as objects

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of the investigation" (p. 107) rather than the meaningful themes to the people themselves, in this case themes of conscientization and praxis. I also believe to better understand critical pedagogy, which treats students as teachers and teachers as students (Freire, 1970), we need to conceptualize how they together develop sociopolitical critique and the potential for social transformation. These are not possible without both the teachers and the students, and analysis of one cannot occur without analysis of the other. In other words, we cannot understand pedagogy by solely examining teachers and we cannot understand student conscientization without also analyzing the actions and statements of their teachers. For these reasons I did not bifurcate my analysis or the presentation of results. Thus each chapter contains interwoven data from both groups in order to gain deeper understanding of the interplay between the two and to focus on the classroom as one entity rather than teachers and students as separate parts.

In line with interpretive and postcritical ethnography, analysis occurred throughout all stages of the research process and was reflexive in continually considering what other interpretations and representations are possible (Anders, 2012). I kept a log of my questions and initial interpretations after every class and interview, while transcribing each interview, and while coding all data. I continually used emerging themes to shape subsequent observations and modify interview questions.

**Co-investigation.** Although critical ethnography aims for emancipation, it has been criticized for undermining respondents' agency and reinscribing power relations through the research process (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Gunzenhauser (2004) suggested minimizing these possibilities through involving respondents in the research process. This echoes the "generative theme" methodology Freire (1970) proposed, which "requires that the investigators

and the people (who would normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as *co-investigators*" (p. 106, italics and parentheses original).

I attempted to foster co-investigation and reduce the potential for exploitation by asking the teacher participants to co-collect and co-analyze data with me. As teachers are constantly collecting and analyzing formal and informal data on their students' thinking and understanding, I did not ask them to formally co-collect so much as to share what they were already noticing and interpreting in their daily interactions with students. They did also contribute to material data collection through assigning writing assignments to students that would help me answer my research questions and then providing me de-identified copies of the student work (the district would not allow me access to identifiable student work).

The teachers co-analyzed data with me primarily in two ways. First, we informally discussed each class I observed as students exited the classroom. Through these conversations I was able to record teachers' interpretations of student comments in class and of their own teaching practices in terms of how well they felt they were meeting their pedagogical goals. The analysis teachers provided gave me access to important background information needed for making sense of some of the student comments as well as many things happening simultaneously in the classroom that I could not observe and record from my limited observational perspective in one corner of the room.

The teachers also co-analyzed the students' interview transcripts with me. I asked teachers to think aloud (den Heyer, 2012) as they read through the transcripts, noting anything they found surprising or interesting, as well as whenever they saw evidence that their pedagogical goals were or were not being met. I also interviewed each teacher after they had completed reading all transcripts, asking questions such as "To what extent do you feel students

expressed critical consciousness?" and "How much of a role do you feel you played in this?" Their interpretations of the student interview data helped add nuance, complexity, and depth to my initial interpretations.

Finally, as I analyzed the data throughout the following year, I emailed teachers and met with them several times to seek their feedback on my initial interpretations. Once I had completed a full draft of the dissertation, I emailed it to both teachers and requested their critical feedback. Both teachers made comments throughout the document, returned it to me, and then discussed their reactions with me in person the following week. Ms. Ray responded both with enthusiastic appreciation for the insights she gained from reading the draft, as well as with two critiques of my interpretations which I have included in the appropriate sections of the discussion. Ms. Bowling said reading the dissertation "re-energized" her and "gave purpose to what [she] was doing" (email communication, February 2, 2016), but she also made comments throughout the document about what she wished she had done differently. I will elaborate upon these comments in subsequent chapters. By involving the teachers I attempted not only to avoid exploitation but also to reach a deeper understanding of critical pedagogy, by accessing their pedagogical wisdom not just through data collection but through actively involving them in theorizing. My inability to actively involve the students in co-investigation is discussed in the limitations section.

**Coding and story-constructing.** Between the period of field work and beginning to transcribe interviews, I took a three-month "lull of reflection" (Lareau, 2011, p. 359). This period created the distance from the field I needed in order to gain new insights about what I had observed and make strange what had by then become familiar to me, as the common sociological wisdom advises. After personally transcribing all interviews, I used MAXQDA data analysis

software to code all class and interview transcripts and field notes. I first conducted open coding followed by focused coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I coded both inductively, to seek emergent themes, and deductively, to identify data that related to a priori codes derived from critical pedagogy literature (Darder, 2012; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008). Examples of inductive codes include "cliffhangers" and "withholding judgment," while deductive codes included, "critiques of racism" and "understanding power." Some codes were *in vivo*, meaning direct quotes from participants (Charmaz, 2006), such as "act like stakes are high." However most were not.  As I coded, I oscillated between each of the teachers' classrooms, as well as between transcripts and field notes in hopes that these juxtapositions would make elements stand out more in contrast with one another. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) noted, "close comparison. . ., attending to both similarities and variations, can often suggest key features or dimensions in detailed, specific ways" (p. 178). The full codebook, including number of instances of each code, can be found in Appendix C.

In the end, I had 290 codes, 256 of which were subcodes or sub-subcodes. The super-code with the most subcodes was "America is flawed," which encompassed such subcodes as "dishonest to its people," "representatives not representative," and—the code with the highest frequency (44 instances) of all 290 codes—"racism." (The second-most frequent code, with 36 instances, was "strategies of social movements"). I decided not to collapse these into broader categories in order to preserve complexity. In order to manage my analysis I did, however, create groups of codes including "dialogue," "reading the world," and "equity, empathy, & perspective." Within these larger groups, I could include both examples as well as counter-examples. For instance, under "reading the world" I also included codes related to anti-critical

viewpoints, such as "bootstrap thinking" and "internalized sexism." I tried to remain reflexive throughout the coding process, continually asking myself what other interpretations could be possible and how my positionality may be shaping my choice of codes (Anders, 2012). Throughout the analytical process I also used peer debriefing to enhance the credibility of the research. Seven peers (four of them research professors) in the social sciences familiar with both ethnographic research and critical theory asked me "searching questions to help [me] confront [my] own values and to guide the next steps in the study" (Mertens, 2010, p. 257).

As I looked for patterns, themes, counter-examples, and relationships among these, I began to see the story (Arksey & Knight, 1999) that seemed to best represent the pedagogies and conscientization occurring in the two classrooms. To set the stage for the rest of the story, I needed to first depict the contexts of the classrooms, which overlapped with the teachers' pedagogical philosophies and demonstrated several key elements of critical pedagogy, such as dialogue (Chapter 4). The next chapter of the story (Chapter 5) emerged from the subcodes under the "America is flawed" code. The segments subcoded under this heading (e.g., "justice system," "religious intolerance," and "unequal access to the vote") informed my analysis of the areas in which students had demonstrated critical consciousness, as well as the areas where more contradictory consciousness was evident. The third chapter of the story (Chapter 6) explores the intersections of these instances of conscientization and contradictory consciousness across areas. For instance, in terms of contradictory consciousness related to both sexism and capitalism, students believed the U.S. to be better by comparison than other countries where domestic abuse is condoned or communist regimes severely restrict rights. The concluding chapter then explores what these contradictions in critical consciousness might mean both in general and for critical pedagogy specifically. In this final chapter, I make connections back to the literature in order to

contribute to the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, particularly in urban U.S. history classrooms.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. Although I attempted to pursue the nonexploitative and co-investigatory promises of postcritical ethnography (Gunzenhauser, 2004), I did not substantially involve the students in co-analysis. In small ways I sought their interpretations of the lessons and their peers' comments, such as through informal conversations during lunch or before class, but their involvement was certainly not as participatory as I would have liked. I agree with Duncan-Andrade and Morrell's (2008) argument:

> When we honor the principles of critical pedagogy while thinking about youth development and urban school reform, we are challenged to create ways to work with youth as collaborators in the research process. Instead of just doing research "on" young people, which makes them the objects of our research gaze, critical research holds the potential to reposition these young people as the subjects of their own research, research that matters to them and larger questions that require their important, but often missing, perspective. (p. 106)

If I had been afforded more time and autonomy from the school district, I would have tried to better align my research methods with the principles of critical pedagogy in this way. I hope to do so in the future.

I was also not able to involve the teachers in the research as much as I would have liked. More ideal would have been allowing them to analyze the transcripts of my classroom observations and working with me to develop codes and plan or even co-write the report. This undoubtedly would have offered additional insights into the various ways critical pedagogy might be conceived by educators with different standpoints. However, two barriers prevented me from doing so. One was a reluctance to ask the teachers to give me any more of their time than they had already so generously given. I suspect, based on my close relationships with them, that

although they would have preferred not to spend the extra time, they would have offered anyway if they thought it would benefit me. The other barrier was my own time limitations. Involving them more extensively would likely have delayed completion of the dissertation.

My close relationship with the teachers may be perceived as allowing bias into my interpretations of their practices; however postcritical ethnographers would argue that all knowledge production is subjective and that critical self-reflexivity on how this subjectivity figures into the work may paint a more complex, nuanced picture of their teaching than would a purportedly objective and unreflexive analysis (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Furthermore, their comfort with me may have been beneficial in that they were more likely to teach as they would without an observer in the room, and they may have been more open and honest in their interview responses and interpretations of the student interview data. For instance they may have felt less self-conscious in admitting areas that they felt were shortcomings or gaps in student understanding, particularly because I had shared my numerous pedagogical weaknesses and insecurities with them both before and during the study.

The benefits to students were less substantial, and this is one limitation of the study in terms of consistency with postcritical commitments. Most of the students interviewed demonstrated pleasure at the rare opportunity for an adult to ask them their honest opinions about society and education. Several thanked me for interviewing them and made comments about how the interview made them consider questions they had not before thought about, such as how they could personally contribute to social change. My hope is that the interviews also provided a chance for them to exercise their critical analysis muscles in a more individualized and open-ended way than is usually available through school assignments, which often consist of specific prompts and criteria for what types of evidence should be used in supporting their arguments.

During independent or group work I also acted as a teaching assistant, providing individual support to students as needed. Nonetheless, the benefits to students were minimal compared to those they might gain as a result of a more participatory action research project such as the one described by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008).

Finally, my understanding of students' conscientization and civic participation in the community is limited by the fact that I only observed them in the school setting. Were I to observe their activities and conversations outside of school, I might gain a fuller picture of the ways in which they may take up, resist, question, or otherwise interact with dominant ideologies such as meritocracy and oppressive social structures such as racism and sexism. Although I asked interview questions in an attempt to gain insights into their activities outside of school, students may engage in resistance in ways they are not aware of. In addition, they may keep their resistance separate from their school identities (intentionally or unintentionally) in their efforts to earn good grades, please their teachers, and not be viewed as troublemakers[10]. I also interviewed only about one-third of the students in each class. Thus I can only draw partial conclusions on the ways in which the critical pedagogies of these teachers influenced the critical consciousness of the students in their classrooms. It was particularly difficult to draw comparisons across lines of race or ethnicity, given that I only interviewed three Latina/o students and three White students overall. However, I was able to use comments in class from the remainder of the students to confirm or complicate the themes emerging from interview data. The teachers' perceptions of the other students' conscientization based on their written work and comments throughout the year enhanced this as well. In future work I hope to include a larger number of students, as well as conduct research in the community beyond the school setting.

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[10] One indication of this can be seen in the example of Ida's polite responses discussed in Chapter 5.

**CHAPTER 4: DIALOGIC HISTORY PEDAGOGY**

**Introduction**

This chapter is intended to serve two purposes: to represent and explore the data related

to how Ms. Bowling and Ms. Ray enacted elements of critical pedagogy, specifically the element

of dialogue, and to use these representations to paint a picture of their classrooms for the readers.

Dialogue, as a major theme, emerged almost immediately as I first began observing these classes

and noticed the amount of student talk that occurred throughout every period. Over the course of

the observations, seven subcodes of dialogue emerged, such as "teaching them to question" and

"encouraging dissent," and beneath each of these were several sub-subcodes (e.g., "devil's

advocate" under "encouraging dissent"). There were 148 instances of all of the codes falling

under dialogue, including subcodes and sub-subcodes. That this became a major finding is

something we might expect given the literature on the centrality of dialogue and voice in critical

pedagogy (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1986; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007). These

scholars have agreed with Freire (1970) when he argued that dialogue generates critical thinking

and acts as a practice of freedom; he also stated, "without dialogue there is no communication,

and without communication there can be no true education" (p. 93). Through exploring the world

with students, rather than imposing information on them, the themes and problems that matter

most to students can become the basis for learning. This is vital because "the starting point for

organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential,

concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the [students]" (p. 95).

Dialogic pedagogy in high school classrooms to develop critical consciousness has been

supported in a small number of small-scale empirical research projects (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Fecho, Coombs, & McAuley, 2012; Stovall, 2006). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) outlined how they designed classroom units and assignments that allowed students to produce their own knowledge and to interrogate one another. Fecho, Coombs, and McAuley (2012) presented two narratives of instructors whose attempts at dialogical pedagogy were thwarted by the students' confusion as a result of their long histories in monological classrooms. Stovall (2006) described dialogue between himself and his students, as well as students with each other, in their hip hop unit. None of these studies detailed specifically how dialogue was used, what was said, what the intended purposes were, nor what the outcomes were. In this chapter, I explore how Ms. Bowling's and Ms. Ray's particular uses of dialogue arose from differing rationales and achieved different ends. Dialogue also took different forms in each classroom. These distinctions reveal how specific elements within critical pedagogy will take different forms even within the same course and geographic location, providing evidence that there is not a single formula or description which can represent critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009).

I also chose to present the findings on dialogue first in order to recreate the classroom scenes for the reader. Any approach drawing on critical theory must thoroughly consider context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and thus readers need an understanding of the contexts of these classrooms in order to make sense of the ways students' conscientization takes shape and is expressed within them. To help set this scene for the readers, I first describe the typical sights and sounds encountered in both classrooms, specifically the sounds of multiple students sharing their thoughts at once and sometimes even while the teacher is speaking.

Dialogic pedagogy was just one of many approaches used by these two teachers that were

consistent with the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy. The others will be explored in

Chapters 5 and 6. Together, these approaches build on the work of Duncan-Andrade and Morrell

(2008) to offer educators a grounded theory of practice, in this case grounded in history, rather

than English, classrooms. Figure 1 provides an overview of the critical pedagogy approaches

used by each teacher as well as those used by both teachers.
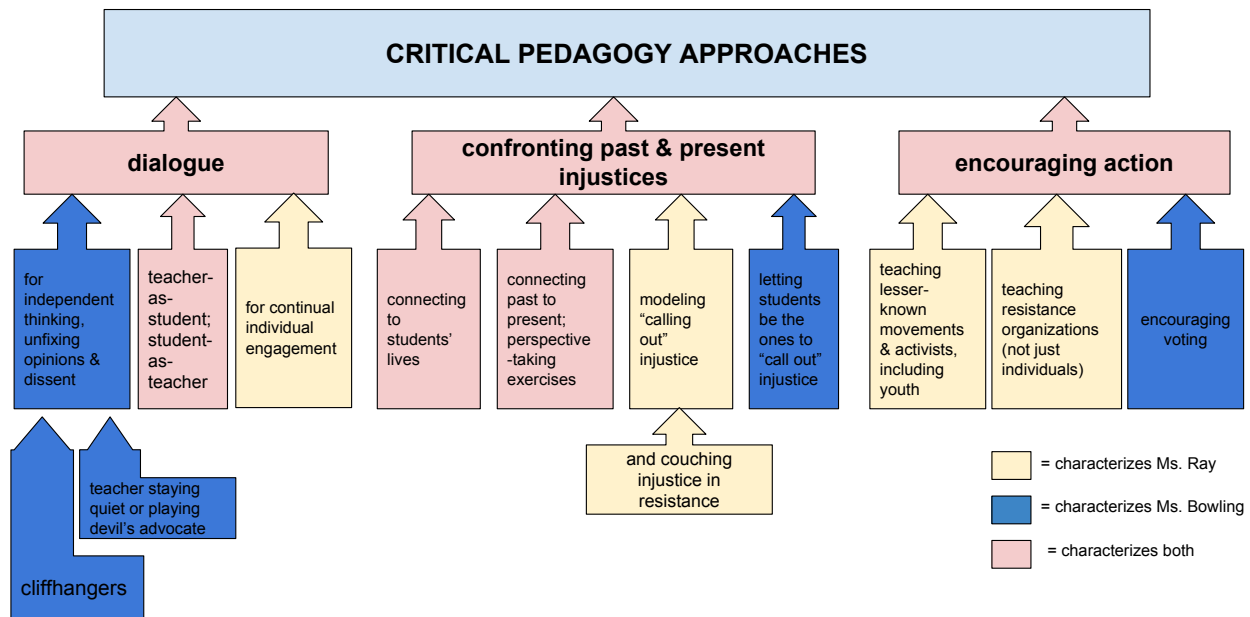


*Figure 1.* Critical Pedagogy Approaches Used by Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling

**Multi-Voice Classrooms**

In the typical history course, one voice is primarily heard: that of the teacher transmitting

static knowledge about past events and people, perhaps supplemented with skill instruction such

as primary source analysis (Parker, 2006; Seixas, 2001). Although the relatively new Common

Core and complementary College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies

State Standards do call for more student inquiry into questions such as the extent to which

institutions "address social and political problems" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013,

p. 30), their curricular, rather than pedagogical focus, is likely to leave the traditional one-voice classroom intact. Furthermore, they still rest on assumptions that the US prioritizes democratic values and that market capitalism is the best economic system (Au, 2013), so that even if students' personal experiences lead them to conclude that our political and economic systems reproduce rather than address social problems, the question of what can be done is left unanswered and unanswerable through this type of instruction.

Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, calls students to analyze how power operates and how power relates to them (Darder, 2012; McLaren, 2007). This cannot be done through transmission of knowledge, or the banking model, which denies students power over their own education (Freire, 1970). Rather, the teacher must be "himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 1970, p. 80). In other words, the students and teacher must together construct the curriculum around the students' reading of the world.

The teachers in this study are striving towards critical pedagogy while caught in the context of standardized formal schooling. The result is an incorporation of as much student dialogue as possible while still covering the chronology of U.S. History, rather than using a less structured and entirely student-directed method such as the problem-posing pedagogy Freire proposed. While not able to construct their curriculum to solely explore social problems identified by students, the teachers do build instruction on the knowledge students bring with them, and help them "see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 83)—the goal of problem-posing education. Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling would rather students talk while they are talking than be the primary voice in the room, so that students can construct their own knowledge and engage more individually than they

would be able to through traditional lecture.

The result is a classroom in which the norm is for multiple voices to be heard at once. The near-constant student talk is atypical of most classrooms, and may appear to some as poor classroom management. In fact, it is the opposite: the teachers have accomplished something more difficult than maintaining silence while they speak. They have established an environment in which students can freely take part in the conversation without the lesson becoming derailed or the teacher becoming irrelevant. Giroux (2011) underscored this point:

> …it is crucial to stress the importance of democratic classroom relations that encourage dialogue, deliberation, and the power of students to raise questions. Moreover, such relations don't signal a retreat from teacher authority as much as they suggest using authority reflexively to provide the conditions for students to exercise intellectual rigor, theoretical competence, and informed judgments. (p. 81)

At times in Ms. Ray's class, for example, several minutes would pass in which she was answering a few individual questions while the rest of the class were engaged in conversations with their neighbors about the topic at hand. As soon as Ms. Ray began addressing the whole class again, the students would cease their conversations (though often then directing multiple more questions to Ms. Ray as a result of their dialogues). In this way, Ms. Ray demonstrated the dialectical authority of critical teachers—which is that "as they relinquish the authority of truth providers, they assume the mature authority of facilitators of student inquiry and problem posing" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 17). The dialogic nature of both classes is atypical of history courses, but what is perhaps more interesting is the distinct intentions behind each teachers' use of dialogue and the resulting divergence in outcomes.

**Dialogue for Dissent, Unfixing Opinions, and to Dissolve the "Homogenous Glob"**

  **Teaching for dissent and deviating from the status quo.** Ms. Bowling described dialogue as a pedagogical priority for the purpose of challenging students' thinking. First,

students had to defend their positions to those who disagreed. They also might have to reconsider their positions after hearing the perspectives of others. Dialogue in her class often consisted of students responding to one another's comments, with occasional prodding from Ms. Bowling to interject omitted perspectives when needed. In her interview, Angela conveyed that she recognized her teacher's regular use of questions and counterarguments to develop students' critical thinking skills:

> She plays the devil's advocate. . . She's like "Do you think this is right how women were treated?" And then she'll show the images of how women were treated, and then how Black people were treated during a certain period. She pushes you to think. (Interview, April 13, 2015)

During the classes I observed, students appeared quite comfortable disagreeing with one another and even with the teacher. For instance when Ms. Bowling interjected a critical perspective about John F. Kennedy, a president who seemed to be universally admired by the class, one student dismissed her criticism and another argued that at least he made "a lot more effort than previous presidents" (Class observation, April 16, 2015).

Ms. Bowling wanted students to disagree with one another, and with her, for several reasons. First, she explained that at this age, many students hesitate to diverge from the crowd:

> I think in high school, you're so worried about being part of the status quo that you won't go with your intuition of what you think. . . . I don't want them to be this homogenous glob. Like it's ok for you to trust what you think and to say it because that's what makes you, you. So kind of getting them to deviate from the social norm. And like not agree with the majority, but to kind of question, alright well do I really agree with that? Or do I actually think something different? And if I think something different then that's ok. I can say that, as long as I back it up with reasons why I believe what I believe. So that's been a goal, and I think it's hard to break down. Because they're scared. They want to be—not *right*—but they don't want to break the status quo. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

Promoting independent thinking is in line with Freire's (1974) conception of dialogue: "I cannot think for others or without others, no one can think for me. . . . Producing and acting upon [our] own ideas—not consuming those of others—must constitute [this] process" (p. 100). In addition,

by encouraging students to question and even dissent from the majority, the groundwork was being laid for students to question and dissent from dominant ideologies. If students struggle to disagree even with their peers, they will have a difficult time disagreeing with a lifetime of socialization into a certain mode of thinking, such as meritocracy or patriarchy. Thus practicing independent thinking in U.S. History class is perhaps an important stepping-stone to being able to engage in social critique (Barton & Levstik, 2008). The following example from a lesson on Hiroshima illustrates students' abilities to express minority opinions and dissent from their peers and their teacher:

> Jerry: If the war had kept fighting people were going to die. If we dropped the atomic bomb, people were going to die. So why didn't we just like have peace talks?

> Ms. Bowling: You tell me.
> [Matt says something I cannot hear, but Ms. Bowling hears it]
> Ms. Bowling: Matt, why do you say that doesn't work?

> Matt: It just doesn't work. It doesn't work.

> Ms. Bowling: But tell me why it doesn't work. We just had a peace talk with Iran. We signed a peace treaty with them.

> Jerry: They could try.

> Ms. Bowling: So I think you just nailed a critical question that people always ask: Why do we go to war rather than talking this out? Why after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 do we declare war on Afghanistan? Exactly why did we declare a war with Afghanistan, killing mostly innocent civilians, then we go to Iraq? We attack Iraq and they have nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks. So you nailed a great question. I don't know.

> Isabel: There's no point in going to war. People are dying so easily and killing for no reason. They're destroying property and there's no point.

> Ms. Bowling: Why do we go to war?

> Isabel: To gain property.

> Student (unidentifiable): To become president.

> Kevin: Respect.

Isabel: That's just dumb.

Kiya: What he [Jerry] was saying like with Japan, that we could just made a treaty.
Student (unidentified): That's what I was about to say. We came to the solution that there was no point in talking with them.

Jerry: Look. Alright. Even though they attacked us, two wrongs don't make a right. So I don't know. Maybe that's just me.

Ms. Bowling: I think there's a valid argument for both sides. (Class observation, April 8, 2015)

Here students disagreed with one another about the viability of replacing military action with peace talks. Matt stood by his opinion that peace talks do not work, even after the teacher questioned it. On the other hand, Jerry defended his position that talks are at least worth trying, even after Matt dismissed that viewpoint as unrealistic. Notice also that Ms. Bowling interjected more questions and prompts than statements (e.g., "Why do we go to war?" and "But tell me why it doesn't work"). This provided more opportunities for students to continue working out their own ideas and suggested that there may not be one right answer to the question of whether peace talks are viable. As a result, students were forming independent opinions and becoming comfortable expressing them without evident concern about whether they were deviating from the "right" answer possessed by the teacher or from the homogenous glob of their peers.

Also note that the dialogue did not flow from teacher to student, back to teacher, and so forth, but rather teacher-student-student-student-teacher. Ms. Bowling aimed for this. She explained that for students to be comfortable expressing dissenting viewpoints, she is careful never to say "you're right" or "you're wrong", but rather lets *them* run those discussions for the most part" (Interview, September 26, 2015). In this way the students acted as teachers (Freire, 1970). She said that much additional work goes into gradually building enough class trust that

students are willing to disagree with one another, especially because, in a racially heterogeneous classroom like theirs, students may worry about offending one another (Kawashima-Ginsberg & Levine, 2015).

Ms. Bowling detailed how she worked to build this mutual trust throughout the year:

It's just breaking down those boundaries, so we can start talking about things like that. So I think in the beginning when they're learning me and I'm learning them, I'll only introduce somewhat of a controversial topic. But I think they think that I'm trying to trick them. And then by the time I get to this point in the year, they trust me enough, and they trust the class enough that they can express their ideas. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

By the end of the year the class was even able to discuss controversial topics such as abortion and the ethical considerations surrounding it. Ms. Ray on the other hand limited her teaching on this issue to basic presentation of the facts of the *Roe v. Wade* case itself, a decision that is very common among social studies teachers (Hess, 2005). Further discussion of divergences between Ms. Ray's and Ms. Bowling's use of dialogue follows in a later section of this chapter.

By interrogating their own opinions, defending them, and deliberating with others to reach decisions, students were also developing important democratic citizenship skills that are necessary (though becoming rare) in our pluralistic and increasingly partisan society (Parker, 1996, 2006, 2011; Stitzlein, 2014). Ms. Bowling believed encouraging dissent would help them gain access to political power in that facilitating "appropriate conversations in the classroom is going to help in the long run so that they can learn how to disagree with someone in a professional way" (Interview, April 3, 2015). Here she echoed Parker's (2006) advocacy for using discussion pedagogy to create a culture of argument through promoting "listening and speaking to similar and different others, publicly, about ideas, conflicts, and public policy" (p.12).

Students were aware that Ms. Bowling wanted them to present multiple and divergent

perspectives, and they appreciated it. Kiya said in her interview, "It's fascinating to learn from

other people. You can learn stuff from talking to the person beside you." She also noticed how

Ms. Bowling asked more questions than she gave answers:

> I love her [Ms. Bowling]. She is so insightful and it teaches me a lot. Like she makes you think. Like with her kinda ending off with a question, like "How would you think about this?" or "How would you think about that?" And it kinda just makes you think. And comments keep rolling and rolling. And hearing other people talk from what she just said. It's very powerful. I like it. (Interview, April 9, 2015)

> **Unfixing opinions.** Ms. Bowling prioritized dissent because she believed that having to

defend one's opinion would force one to reconsider and perhaps even retract the opinion in light

of new evidence. She explained,

> Making them realize why they disagree with someone forces them to understand what they really think about something. And that's important. Because maybe you don't really think what you think. And you have to argue against it for you to really understand what it is that you think. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

Angela perceptively captured one of Ms. Bowling's pedagogical intents when she stated, "She

wants you to contradict your own opinion" (Interview, April 13, 2015).  For example, when

Angela declared John F. Kennedy her favorite president and no one countered her, Ms. Bowling

said,

> Angela, I'm going to play devil's advocate for a minute. . . . What if I told you that on the surface he fights for civil rights, but he doesn't actually do a lot to achieve that? (Class observation, April 16, 2015)

Ms. Bowling did not ask this question in order to criticize John F. Kennedy or to dissuade

Angela from preferring him to other presidents. Rather she just wanted to "play devil's advocate,"

as she often did, to prompt students to consider the counter-perspective to their own. She did this

even when she agreed with the student's opinion.

This underscores another of Ms. Bowling's goals, which was to unfix[11] some of the unexamined assumptions and perspectives students entered her class with:

> I mean teaching in a public high school, at the end of the day test scores are really important. But kids aren't going to care about the test if they don't care about the class. And I feel like one way to get them to care about the class is to get them to engage with the material. And the only way I really feel like you can do that is to get them to question it. And they obviously come to the table with preconceived notions. But if you get them to leave questioning those, then I really feel like they're doing Bloom's Taxonomy right. They're analyzing and they're assessing and they're evaluating and they're synthesizing. Maybe even a completely new approach to it. And so hopefully that way it sticks in their brain somewhere. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

One way she attempted to unfix students' opinions was by intentionally ending the class with a cliffhanger. She actually wanted her students to "leave [class] thinking, okay I don't know what I think anymore" because then "they want to come back and they want a conclusion to it. So to not give them that conclusion and make them think of it themselves, I think is really good" (Interview, April 3, 2015). I asked how she knew they wanted a conclusion and she replied,

> I think it's them leaving the classroom talking about it. Because I feel like they're seeking out, "Ok this is now what I think. What do you think?" And on their way to [their next] class, like trying to have that conclusion, that end piece. So just listening to them as they leave. Or even if they're just sitting there after the bell rings and they're just like, "Wow!" I mean it doesn't happen—I wish it happened more. But those are the classes where I'm like, okay something happened in the class today. And that was really great. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

Based on Ms. Bowling's and my own observations, students truly did leave the class on these days carrying their conversations into the hallways and expressing an eagerness to finish processing their thoughts. Student thus continued to construct their own knowledge even beyond the classroom, perhaps then learning that knowledge does not have to be deposited by the teacher nor is it something that can only be gained inside classroom walls. This is in contrast to a trend found in working-class schools in which students think knowledge comes from an educational

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[11] I prefer the term *unfix* to *unsettle* or *disrupt* to emphasize the stability of the students' opinions prior to the teachers' interventions.

authority, rather than from within themselves (Anyon, 1981).

In discussing *Roe v. Wade,* Ms. Bowling recognized that most students already had opinions on abortion and wanted them to think more about the underlying philosophical perspectives that underlie each position. She first "set that conversation up, saying, 'This is a very touchy subject. And you need to be respectful of people that believe different things'" and then went on to ask a series of questions for them to consider:

> When is a baby a baby? When is a fetus a life? When are you killing something? Are you killing something at the moment of conception? Is that a life? Or is it a life four months later when the baby has lungs? Or is it a life when the baby has a heart? Or is it not a life until the baby is born? . . . At first it's just like silent because they're just trying to process it. They're like, "I don't know what you're asking." And then like pushing them. Going month-by-month with them. Yeah you'll have some people say, "Well as soon as conception happens, that's a potential life." And then you'll have other people say, "Well no. It doesn't have a brain. It doesn't have a heart. It doesn't have lungs. It's not a life. So if you end or you terminate the pregnancy before that then you're not killing anything. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

This demonstrates her desire to start a dialogue rather than deposit information (Freire, 1970). She even admitted that she, too, does not know what she thinks constitutes life. In doing so she modeled that teachers co-learn with students and that the complexity of some questions require more extended contemplation than can be achieved in a single class period. She never asked students to solidify their own position on the topic, but rather just to consider the various viewpoints. In fact her stream of questions gave students so much to think about that they were unlikely to be able to boil their thoughts down to a single position. Through raising questions without any right or wrong answers, these class dialogues disrupted the tendency some students showed of evaluating acts or decisions simply as good or bad. This ability to think in more complex ways is a necessary step if students are to understand concepts such as hegemony and contradictory consciousness.

Although Ms. Bowling considered herself progressive, she tried to be impartial in her

efforts to unfix opinions. In other words, she challenged students to rethink progressive as well as conservative ideas, suggesting that her intentions were more about unfixing than they were about fostering a certain mindset. As discussed in the following sections, Ms. Bowling's attempts to appear neutral were frustrating to some students but many recognized it was her way of pushing students to "contradict" (Angela, Interview, April 13, 2015) their own opinions. In teaching about the New Deal, for instance, Lexa said it was greedy for the rich to disapprove of the legislation. The following conversation ensued:

> Ms. Bowling: Alright I'm going to play devil's advocate for a second, ok Lexa? Let's say you get a PhD. While you're in school for 12 years you're probably not working full time, so you could've been making full time pay. . . . Now you're making $250,000. Now let's say the government says, that's great Lexa that you're making that much money, but there's this family in [their city]. There's 3 kids. The mom got laid off; she can't work because she has a disability. . .  The government is going to say, Lexa you make a lot of money, why can't we take $25,000 from you and give it to them? So you'd be ok with this?

> Lexa: Yeah! I'm making a lot of money.

> Isabel: I'm ok with it.

> Kevin: It's *your money*.

> Male student (unidentifiable): They need to get a job.

> Ms. Bowling: I want to hear all of your opinions. Alex, I saw you shaking your head, like No! Why?

> Alex: It's a lot and you worked hard for it, and you should be able to spend it how you like. If you want to help or not, that's up to you. (Class observation, March 19, 2015)

This excerpt shows that Ms. Bowling invited differing perspectives, even if they opposed her own or those consistent with social justice.  This encouraged independent thinking and dissenting thought, although it also resulted in several students expressing individualistic and meritocratic thinking. The problem of leaving such anti-critical comments unchecked will be discussed Chapter 6.

Importantly, however, the practice of unfixing opinions aligns with the dialectical view of knowledge in critical pedagogy that avoids "formation of absolute dichotomies or rigid polarizations of thought or practice" (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 11). The practice of unfixing opinions may give pause to social studies teachers, concerned with standards that require students to form specific arguments and develop claims (e.g., EdTPA, C3 Framework). Teachers may worry that students will not be able to choose one position to defend if they are more attentive to rethinking and questioning. However, Mayo (2009) argued that the dominant discourse of "competences" (such as building and supporting arguments) should be replaced with a more holistic view of education that incorporates critical citizenship. A critical citizenship approach would prioritize questioning over answering and would allow students to experiment with new ways of seeing, thinking, and relating to one another (Andreotti, 2006; Johnson & Morris, 2010).

Through unfixing opinions, students gain power over their learning by constructing knowledge and teaching each other outside of class and without oversight from an authority. Problem-solving is replaced with problem-posing (Freire, 1970). This sends a message that learning history is less about memorizing facts than it is about grappling with questions that continue to baffle scholars, and it "presumes that the student has something to add to the story" (Sizer & Sizer, 1999, p. 26). Cliffhangers invite students to carry their dialogues beyond the classroom walls and into public spaces. Outside of schools, public spaces are also where community members must hash out divergent viewpoints to come to a consensus on how to organize society. This calls to mind Habermas's (1991) notion of the public sphere as a construct that allows civil society to stand up to the state through debate and opposition. In other words, carrying these cliffhanger conversations into the hallways may give students practice in

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public deliberation and resistance. Furthermore, placing emphasis on the questioning of opinions, rather than formation and defense of them, teaches that many issues are too complex for quick answers. Instead, such issues merit considerable contemplation before one argues for one position or another.

**Heterogeneity as an Impetus for Dialogic Pedagogy**

Another reason Ms. Bowling invited differing student perspectives was in the hopes that students would raise each other's critical consciousness. She believed students were likelier to open their minds to the perspectives of their peers than to a perspective she presented to them as an authority figure. She also avoided direct statements of her critical viewpoints because of the heterogeneity of her class. After Ms. Ray told me in her interview that she "calls things racist on the first day" (September 19, 2015), I asked Ms. Bowling if she would also explicitly call something racist in class. She responded, "Like me leading the discussion? Probably not. I would be like, 'Is this racist?' And then get them to call it out" (Interview, September 26, 2015). She explained that she would be more willing to call things racist if she taught a class with a demographic more similar to Ms. Ray's (predominantly Black), but that with White students she would have to "slowly break down those layers, where they don't think that I'm preaching a message" (Interview, September 26, 2015).

Even when student comments contained elements of sexism or failure to recognize injustice, Ms. Bowling refrained from responding because she perceived that students were more likely to reconsider their position if they were confronted by a peer, rather than the teacher. At times she would play devil's advocate to encourage another student to make the point she was refraining from stating. Sometimes this left anti-critical statements unchallenged (discussed further below). But it did remind students that their knowledge and opinions matter, and it gave

students practice defending a minority position—a skill necessary if they are to oppose the mainstream ideologies that keep them in subordinate social positions.

Students noticed that Ms. Bowling rarely stated her own position. When Angela described Ms. Bowling as teaching "the in-between" and I asked her to clarify, she responded, "In a way she puts her opinion in there—well, she doesn't put it in there. She wants—she pushes you to think about what it is" (Interview, April 13, 2015). In her assertion that, "[Ms. Bowling] wants you to contradict your own opinion," Angela even recognized that the feigned neutrality was not only to avoid influencing students' opinions, as other students thought, but also to get students to reconsider theirs. This supports the theme that students were internalizing the idea that opinions should be as often interrogated and revised as they should be solidified and defended.

Ms. Bowling was also drawing on the premise of critical pedagogy that students from diverse groups "can learn much from one another if provided the space to exchange ideas and analyze mutual difficulties. As such a powerful force, difference must not simply be tolerated, but cultivated as a spark to human creativity and evolution" (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 38). Through this exchange of ideas, students of more privileged backgrounds gained a window into the experiences of the less privileged, a window that might be clearer if constructed by peers rather than their White, middle-class teacher. An example of this, described in Chapter 5, is the dialogue Ms. Bowling facilitated on the events in Ferguson and Baltimore, during which Ms. Bowling felt the White students were learning about their own privilege through the stories of their Black peers.

**Anti-critical Voices**

As mentioned above, encouraging students to disagree with one another invites

perspectives that may be anti-critical. Indeed some critics of discussion pedagogy have

contended that classroom discussions can actually reinforce relations of subjugation when the

perspectives of marginalized students are not heard or valued (Parker, 2006). In Ms. Bowling's

classroom, the perspectives of all students appeared to be given relatively equal weight. Instead

the problem was that some (mostly male, but both White and Black) students seemed to be

stating anti-critical comments out of an attempt to fulfill Ms. Bowling's desire for dissent. And

with the teacher relying on students to raise each other's critical consciousness and refraining

from directly making critical statements herself, some anti-critical perspectives were voiced and

unchecked in Ms. Bowling's class. For instance, the following excerpt from a lesson on flappers

is illustrative of some of the sexist comments made and defended, in spite of peer disapproval:

> Ms. Bowling: Over the decades those hem lines have gone from being covered through
> your ankles to being all the way to what you guys see going around the hallways today.
> (Several laugh)
>
> Brice: There's nothing wrong with that.
>
> Lexa, Kiya, and Angela (and others): Yes there is.
>
> Ms. Bowling: So--Ok let's do this. Because I want to see if you guys can pick up on this.
> Brice, why is there nothing wrong with it?
>
> Brice: Can we have a court thing?
>
> Kiya: I want to have a debate. Please!
> Ms. Bowling: But tell me why you think there's nothing wrong with it.
>
> Brice: Because that's what guys like. (Whole class reacts loudly. Brice jokingly pretends
> to leave the room).
>
> Kiya: Ms. Bowling! Ms. Bowling! (Whispers, "oh my god".) Ok so, you say that's what
> guys like but in all reality guys go for the girls that put themselves out there because they
> know they're easy to get with. (speaking to Brice) But the girls who are conservative,
> those are not the ones that they go for. That's all I'm trying to say. Like if a girl presents
> herself like that you see her automatically as being a hoe or someone you can get with
> easily. Now am I right?

Brice: Maybe it's because it's warm. (laughs) . . .

Kevin: Hey don't put it on the shelf. If you got it flaunt it. (Class observation, March 13, 2015)

The conversation continued, with many of the young women in the room defending sexist views out of a misperception that women are freely choosing to wear provocative clothing. Ms. Bowling did attempt to intervene, but remained consistent in her approach of asking questions rather than making statements:

I really want to draw a line right now. You see most males being the ones who are saying you have to look a certain way, you should look a certain way right? Where you're seeing most females saying, "Well you know time and place for everything, you can dress a certain way." What if the tides were turned, if it were women that were judging every single thing a male did right --"Oh you don't have enough muscle, you're not tall enough, you're not rich enough, you're not this you're not that." It goes both ways ok. (Class observation, March 13, 2015)

Ms. Bowling then let a female student have the closing word. Jaia explained that looks are only what initially attracts a person, but the mind is what keeps a person attracted. She agreed there is "a time and a place for everything," but added, "personally I don't think outside of the house is a place to show your booty cheeks." No one raised the point that the question is not whether women should wear revealing clothing but how our patriarchal society mystifies women to believe they are freely choosing to wear revealing clothing for their own benefit, rather than to fulfill the wishes of the dominant sex (Nussbaum, 1995; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

The implication here is that dialogue may not always bring about conscientization and sometimes may reinforce oppressive ideologies. The question still to be answered is whether open expression of anti-critical views is ultimately likelier to raise critical consciousness than a teacher cutting off such comments with an explanation of patriarchy. Perhaps Ms. Bowling is right that students are less convinced by the teacher than they are by their peers. And she is being true to critical pedagogy by positioning herself on an equal plane with students. However when

the students are acting as "sub-oppressors" (Freire, 1970, p. 46)—in other words oppressed who act as oppressors because they have internalized the structure—what intervention, if any, should be made? Some critics of dialogic pedagogy have argued that some perspectives can be marginalized by dominant voices, just as they are in wider society. This was the case here, even though the dominant views were often aired by students from subordinate groups (e.g., women voicing anti-feminist opinions). In response to the critics, Parker (2006) argued that domination-free classroom discussions might be possible if people engage with humility, caution, and reciprocity. The problem in the above example is not a single student voiced the critical view; thus it couldn't be humbly or reciprocally considered. In such a case, perhaps it is the teacher that should insert the critical perspective. Ms. Bowling seemed to agree—one of the comments she made upon reading a draft of the dissertation is that she wished she saw where she did not "push them enough" and she asked how she should have corrected the students' unchecked anti-feminism. Chapter 7 contains further exploration of the balance between allowing students to direct classroom dialogue versus explicitly promoting a critical perspective.

**A Less Dissentful Purpose for Dialogue**

Ms. Ray's use of dialogue was less focused on eliciting dissent and more with encouraging engagement with the issue at hand and giving students opportunities to express their reactions and opinions. Her context was quite different from Ms. Bowling's. Not only were her students predominantly Black, but the small, intimate atmosphere at her magnet school had created a community in which students were more accepting of difference and thus perhaps less worried about offending their peers. For example, at least four of the students in Ms. Ray's 4th period class publicly identified as lesbians, and Ms. Ray said that many of her religiously conservative students had gradually become more accepting of same-sex relationships during

their time at this high school. Thus, Ms. Ray may not have been as concerned about the homogenous glob as Ms. Bowling was and therefore less focused on encouraging her students to disagree with one another.

Another reason Ms. Ray encouraged less dissent, it seemed, was because she felt more comfortable calling out forms of oppression herself, rather than preferring students to do so with the mindset that unconvinced students would be more persuaded by their peers than by their teacher (as Ms. Bowling perceived). She, like Ms. Bowling, acknowledged that having a classroom that was predominantly Black meant she was not as concerned about persuading students that racism still exists than she might be in a classroom with more White students:

> I can imagine that if I were in a class where people were more invested in privilege, in sort of the hierarchy as it exists, that that could be a stumbling block to—that there would be more stages of maybe resistance to even the idea that injustice is still a thing. Or guilt. (Interview, September 19, 2015)

This is not to say that her students displayed more critical consciousness overall than Ms. Bowling's students did. In fact, both groups were similar in their acknowledgment of racism and xenophobia as well as in their less-formed critiques of sexism and capitalism (discussed in the next chapter). But the point is that Ms. Ray used dialogue for a different purpose than Ms. Bowling did, in part due to her class/school context and in part due to the differences in their goals as teachers. Whereas Ms. Bowling's primary goal was to get students to think independently, Ms. Ray's primary goal was for students to understand the "historical grounding of why certain things are the way they are" and to think about "what impact will they go out and make" (Interview, March 28, 2015).

For both of these goals, Ms. Ray used dialogue because it allowed her to hear and respond to what students were thinking and gave students opportunities to process their thoughts with their peers, ask more questions, and spend more time individually grappling with concepts.

When I started this project I chose to observe Ms. Ray's 4th period class because she described them to me as "rowdy as hell but usually in a very engaged and opinionated way" (personal communication, February 11, 2015). Indeed, the classroom often sounded like a cacophony of student voices, as several asked questions to the teacher, and most of the rest turned to a neighbor to share their own thoughts the topic. Ms. Ray told me that at the beginning of the year she had tried to limit the side conversations because she could not possibly monitor all of them, but she ultimately realized this was a losing battle and that since students were typically discussing the class content, these side conversations were actually a valuable source of student-constructed knowledge.

Ms. Ray also allowed students to interrupt her with their questions and reactions to her lectures. Below is an example from her lesson on Hiroshima. While showing a clip from a video about the impacts of the bomb, students narrated over the video with the following comments:

Dakota: They make it look really sad with all the kids and people . .

Dakota: They just having their lives, daily routines. Can we get another perspective?

Ta'sia: He was gone in one second [referring to a man disappearing after the bomb was dropped]

Ida: For real? that fast?

Fairington: Dang. Them houses is gone.

Ida: Who creates this type of stuff?

Maurice: The United States.

Amina: They didn't drop it on an army base; it was just on regular people.

Maurice: Whoa wait a minute. I hope y'all not forgetting about Pearl Harbor.

Ida: That's what I was about to say.

Ms. Ray: I want you to push pause on that thought. I want you to hold onto that. And not

let go of it. We're gonna watch the video and then we'll have a chance to answer our essential question, which is 'was this the right thing to do?'

Parker: I believe America would do something like that.

Fairington: I don't know what America might do. (Class observation, March 19, 2015)

Here we see students comfortable sharing a range of reactions and opposing opinions (e.g., "I hope y'all not forgetting about Pearl Harbor). Ms. Ray allowed students to call out all of their reactions and thoughts as they watched the film, only asking them to refrain from solidifying their opinions until they had discussed the reasons behind President Truman's decision:

> What I want you to do in this next phase is to your *best* to keep an open mind. Raise your hand if you already have an opinion about whether the US should have dropped this bomb. (Around 10 people raised hands). That's what I figured. Y'all are a nice and opinionated group right? (They laugh). That's what I like about you. What I'm going to ask you to do with that opinion right now is not to get rid of it, not to change it but just put it to the side. We're going to go through together some of the reasons why Truman decided to do it and some of the reasons people said he shouldn't have done it. And then . . . you will have a chance to express what that opinion is, and if you were an advisor to Truman as he was making this decision, what would you have told him. (Class observation, March 19, 2015)

Some similarity is evident here with Ms. Bowling's goal of unfixing students' opinions, although Ms. Ray's pedagogy was less aimed at having students leave class not knowing what they think anymore. Rather than presenting students with practically unanswerable questions such as "when is a life a life?", Ms. Ray wanted students to understand "the historical grounding of why things are the way they are"; therefore she wanted students to form opinions, as long as they were based on an understanding of the complexity and context of the event (Kincheloe, 2008). Her major fear was not that students would follow along with the status quo, as Ms. Bowling feared. Rather Ms. Ray focused on complexity of historical events out of a fear that students would otherwise have an oversimplified understanding of the world. She explained that she did not want them to leave her course thinking, "'But why are white people always whatever?' Or 'Why are men

always whatever?'" (Interview, March 28, 2015). Thus she did not pose unanswerable questions

or muddle student opinions, but rather helped students to form opinions that were informed by

and reflected the underlying complexities of the issue at hand.

In order to ensure students gained a more complicated and complete understanding, Ms.

Ray presented multiple perspectives herself, rather than relying on the diverse students in her

class to do so (discussed further in the next chapter). Thus the dialogue in her class was not

intended to challenge students' thinking, but rather to provide an outlet for their thoughts. In

addition, she treated the students as co-teachers (Freire, 1970). She followed the discussion

wherever they directed it and modified her plans according to their requests. For instance one

student asked why they did not have more debates, which she admitted to me that this hurt her

feelings a bit at first, but she came in the next day and told the class,

> Yesterday [student's name] said something that struck my heart. He said why don't we do things like debates anymore? And I said you know—well first I fussed him out a little bit, but then I went home and thought about it a little bit more. And I decided the way we should do class today I think should honor the fact that y'all are usually really good with that kind of thing. And so I've set up on purpose to take advantage of how good y'all are at putting yourselves in other people's shoes and having those conversations (Class observation, April 14, 2015).

She also described how Amina sometimes took a teacher role in class by interjecting her

generally more critical view whenever "she perceives that as a voice that is needed" (Interview,

September 19, 2015). Ms. Ray welcomed these additions from Amina, whereas some teachers

might fear they threatened her authority or were a critique of her teaching. In these ways Ms.

Ray's multi-voice classroom offers a possibility of how pedagogy can be dialogical and does so

in a way that is analytically distinct from that of Ms. Bowling's use of dialogue.

**Summary**

Both teachers' use of dialogue approached Freire and Macedo's (1995) conception of

dialogue not as a technique but as an epistemological relationship. Students and teachers learned together and from one another, replacing the typical banking model with greater student power over their own construction of knowledge. Ms. Ray essentially forfeited some control over the actions and learning occurring in the classroom, by allowing students to have side conversations about history, to call out their reactions to new information, and to ask the sometimes endless stream of questions their curious minds produced. She did not surrender authority in doing so. Rather she demonstrated the type of pedagogy Freire and Macedo (1995) advocated by maintaining authority while also allowing students to arrive at their own conclusions (Au, 2011). This altered the traditional student-teacher relationship, but was also a technique in some ways— one that allowed her to monitor their thinking and respond to misperceptions or oversimplifications they might express, so that she could ensure students left her class with a complicated understanding of history.

Ms. Bowling, on the other hand, actively pushed students to disagree with one another, to reconsider their own opinions, and to accept that sometimes it is better *not* to have a solidified opinion on a complicated issue. The regimes of truth (Foucault, 1991) typifying most classrooms were thus open to contestation. She, too, used dialogue as a technique, although for a different purpose than Ms. Ray's. Ms. Bowling's goal was to get students comfortable defending a minority position. Although such dialogue might ideally open up spaces for oppositional ideologies, it also resulted in the airing of some anti-critical statements, in which students acted as sub-oppressors. After reading the first draft of this dissertation, Ms. Bowling commented, "I see what I missed and where I didn't push them enough.  Also, how I should have corrected student's unchecked [word missing] especially feminism" (e-mail communication, February 2, 2016). This suggests Ms. Bowling recognizes areas in which her feigned neutrality interfered

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with her goals of developing critical consciousness. In my interpretation, this does not mean she was not using critical pedagogy. As mentioned in the literature review, critical pedagogy should be understood primarily as a commitment rather than an endpoint and thus critical educators may be at many different stages along the path toward their own conscientization as well as facilitating that of their students (Fischman & Haas, 2009). I classify Ms. Bowling as a critical educator because one of her primary goals was developing students' critical consciousness and she continually reflected, both through this research project and throughout her teaching, on how she could better reach this goal. In addition, students' airing of anti-critical comments may also be a preliminary stage toward critical consciousness (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008) in that contradictory consciousness can be laid bare for scrutiny. Furthermore, students also gained practice in the democratic citizenship skills of public debate, defending minority viewpoints, reconsidering their own stances, and, in some cases, working to achieve consensus (Parker, 2006; Stitzlein, 2014).

Dialogue was not the only element of critical pedagogy employed by these teachers. The next chapter, though focusing primarily on students' conscientization, will also present some of their other approaches, such as connecting past to present, calling out injustices, and teaching critical media literacy.

**CHAPTER 5: STUDENT CONSCIENTIZATION AT VARYING DEPTHS: CRITIQUES OF RACISM, SEXISM, NEOCOLONIALISM, AND CAPITALISM**

**Introduction**

An important aim of critical pedagogy is for students to "name the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 81) or in other words understand how power operates to maintain social hierarchies (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2005). In Freire's problem-posing education, awareness is the first stage, preceding action and reflection. He called this awareness *conscientização*, often translated into English as conscientization, or critical consciousness development. This chapter explores findings related to my second research question, "In what ways and to what extent do students appear to become more critically conscious, if at all?"

The U.S. History course is a prime site for conscientization. Giroux (2011) argued that a deep understanding of history is "necessary for the development of a collective critical consciousness" (p. 21), but that history is being suppressed in the interests of the dominant power, resulting in a form of "social amnesia" (p. 21). This is particularly the case at present, while conservative ideologues are effectively controlling the curriculum of many states (see Wong, 2015 for one recent example) and of the Advanced Placement U.S. History course (Fischer, 2015), erasing episodes that cast doubt on the notion of American Exceptionalism and seeking to create a compliant, unquestioning populace to support the status quo.

While some research in social studies classrooms has explored conscientization focused on specific social structures such as racism (McDonough, 2009; Tyson, 2002) and sexism (Merryfield & Subedi, 2003), none has looked more broadly at how students develop abilities to critique oppressive structures in general or in relation to one another. Freire and other critical

pedagogy theorists have opposed analyses that reduced oppression to one dimension, advocating instead a "theoretical framework where the object of oppression is cut across by such factors as race, class, gender, culture, language, and ethnicity" (Macedo, 2008, p. 15). In the two classes observed in this study, most students in class comments and interviews demonstrated significant conscientization related to racism, some degree related to nationalism and American exceptionalism, and very minimal conscientization related to sexism, neocolonialism, or capitalism. Because this chapter relies more on student data than teacher data, the analysis presented here was conducted in conjunction with the teachers, whereas Chapter 4 is primarily my own interpretation of the teachers' practices (with the exception of Ms. Bowling's responses to my interpretation). Co-analyzing the student data with the teachers allowed deeper insights into the factors that might have contributed to and limited students' conscientization.

The U.S. History course, which for these students lasts 90 minutes per day for one year, has a relatively minor impact on students' worldview compared to other influences such as family, peer groups, media, religion, and their first 11 years of schooling. However, I followed up most student interview questions which asked for specific opinions on the U.S., social problems, etc. with a question along the lines of, "Has your U.S. History class influenced that opinion/perspective in any ways?" so that students might share this relationship, to the extent they were aware of it. I also used interviews with the teachers to learn more about students' perspectives at the beginning of the year in order to trace changes that may have occurred.

This chapter opens with the teachers' stated goals in terms of deepening students' critical consciousness to establish the context in which students were learning to critique. I then establish some background context for their learning by describing students' experiences in prior history courses (as described by the students). Before delving into conscientization of present inequities,

I briefly describe students' critiques of past injustices. Given this was a U.S. History course, the content obviously focused more on events such as the Trail of Tears and the dropping of the atomic bomb than on contemporary inequities. However, since the goal of critical pedagogy is emancipation (Freire, 1970), I was more interested in their development of conscientization regarding the present. Thus the section exploring that topic is much lengthier and explores their varying levels of critiques of oppressive social structures separately (i.e. racism, sexism, neocolonialism[12], and capitalism).

**Teacher Goals: Honesty without Cynicism**

Before delving into the data on student conscientization, I first present the related teachers' goals so that readers may better evaluate the extent to which conscientization stemmed from class versus from home, peer groups, or other sources. Both teachers wanted students to be able to recognize injustices both in history and in the present. Ms. Bowling described one of her goals as "to not teach it in this light that America is so amazing, but rather has fallen and made mistakes and ostracized groups of people," later adding:

> We're coming from a perspective where we're the superpower and that comes with some kind of ignorance to the way that other countries look at us. So having them realize, one, that they're privileged to live in the country that they do. But secondly, just because we're powerful right now doesn't mean that we'll always be powerful. And it doesn't mean we can take over other places and treat people terribly. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

Ms. Ray explained that one of the ways she tries to prepare students to "go out and challenge unjust systems" is by

> being really upfront with them about when I personally see things or feel things that are unjust. And not being afraid to answer their questions about "why is this this?" and "how come this is?" with like, "Because of racism" or "Because this person or group wanted to

---

[12] I use *neocolonialism* to signify the US's continued domination over other countries, regions, or groups of people through such means as economic control, political influence, or cultural imperialism (Simmons & Sefa Dei, 2012).

hold on to their economic power. And sort of being really upfront with them and calling things like I see it in terms of why things are the way they are. So that they can feel empowered to speak that, too. I think they have maybe in the past, from earlier teachers, gotten a lot of like, "Well, it's complicated." Or "well, I can't really explain that right now" or whatever. And I don't mean to say that I want to boil everything down to saying "Oh it's because of racism or because of classism or homophobia or whatever." But being able to verbalize and call out those things when they occur in history. I think hopefully will make students--or I hope that it will make students more willing to call those things out in the present. And then to act on them. (Interview, March 28, 2015)

Ms. Ray, however, was also concerned that "they're just going to believe that things have always been bad and will always be bad" (Interview, March 28, 2015), so she purposefully made sure always "to couch the oppression in resistance. And not tell about anything without showing how someone was pushing back against it" (Interview, September 29, 2015). The implications of this on students' interest in political involvement will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Prior Learning: Lies Previous Teachers Told (or Did Not Tell) Them**

In his book, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong,* sociologist James Loewen (1995) debunked myths presented in textbooks as Eurocentric and bland narratives intended to avoid controversy. I wondered whether students' prior experiences in U.S. history courses had been similarly whitewashed, so I asked during our interviews, "Have you learned anything in this class that was different from what you'd learned or heard about the US in the past?" I heard a range of answers. Several students (e.g., Amina and Roman) answered along the same lines as Dolores: "I think it was the same, just with more detail" (Interview, April 14, 2015). A few struggled to remember specific content that might have conflicted with their past lessons (e.g., Melony and Kiya).

Others did report differences. Angela, William, and Josephine reported that this was the first time they learned Christopher Columbus was not the hero he is purported to be. Angela explained that this contradiction upset her to some extent, but it did not significantly alter her

opinion of the U.S.:

> I used to learn-- back in middle school . . . Christopher Columbus was all great and whatnot. When I got here, Christopher Columbus is a murderist, rapist, sociopath, who got a whole bunch of mental issues. So that's what I learned different. And until now they didn't really talk about the minority group. They just talk about white people and like how everything was alright and good. They didn't show how bad it was for the minority group.

> Interviewer: When you started to learn these things in Ms. Bowling's class, and they were different from what you'd learned before, how did you feel?

> Angela: I was kinda--I was shocked and upset. But I wasn't like total, "boohoo! Let me go write somebody a letter!" you know. I was just like, that's pretty messed up.

> Interviewer: Did it change how you feel about the U.S. as a country?

> Angela: In a way. Mm. Not really. I mean. I'm glad that I learned it, that way--like to know--that way I could pass it onto my children if I was to have a conversation I could tell them about it, but I still acknowledge that the past is the past. There's nothing I can do. Now if it so happens again, to repeat—if the past starts to repeat—I can try to prevent it. (Interview, April 13, 2015)

Angela here expressed a desire to learn history more accurately, even if the truth was upsetting or reprehensible. This was echoed in others' interviews as well. Isabel, who had transferred from a school in Queens in the middle of this year, said of her schools in New York:

> Isabel: Like they won't teach you the corrupt stuff. Like Ms. Bowling did. Because I was like, "oh." Because if I was in New York, I don't think that teacher would've taught that. She would've been like, "Oh America is a really good place!" And just give you the positive. But she [Ms. Bowling] gives you the positive and the negative, so you'll be like, "Oh. Now I see."

> Interviewer: So you think it's good for the teacher to tell you the negative?

> Isabel: Yeah it's really good.

> Interviewer: Why is that good?

> Isabel: Because you won't be thinking-- if they only tell you the positive, it's like all fairy tale stuff. But if you see the positive and the negative you'll be like, "Do I really like being American? Or do I not?"

> Interviewer: Do you think it's ok for students to maybe decide they don't like being

American?

> Isabel: Yeah, it is ok. Because maybe they could make a change in the future. (Interview, April 15, 2015)

Later in her interview Isabel also said that since Ms. Bowling "teaches the positive and negative, I pay more attention." Angela and Isabel's statements indicate that learning the "negative" elements of American history did not make them disillusioned or cynical about the potential for a better future. In fact, it made them more interested in learning and committed to effecting change. The interview with Isabel continued:

> Interviewer: Do you think the way Ms. Bowling teaches might encourage students to make a change in the future?

> Isabel: Yeah, I think it will. Cuz I'm-a be honest. I didn't like social studies at all. But . . . all I [had] heard was positive about the United States, so I'm like "ok, I already knew that." Now since she [Ms. Bowling] teaches the positive and negative, I pay more attention. I be like, "Oh! That's interesting. I didn't know that [sic]." (Interview, April 15, 2015)

A student in Ms. Ray's class, Kiara, expressed appreciation for Ms. Ray's honesty in a letter she wrote to her at the end of the year. Ms. Ray said she was surprised to receive it because she had "butted heads with" Kiara at the beginning of the year after she displayed some disrespectful behaviors in class. Ms. Ray had addressed the behavior with her and had no similar problems since, but she was still surprised and delighted by the gesture. Ms. Ray paraphrased the letter:

> "Thank you so much for teaching me so much about Black History and opening my eyes to so many things." She didn't say, "I think so much more critically now," but like, "I'm way more aware of things now, and I see the world differently. And you encouraged me. And that was really great." (Interview, September 29, 2015)

Angela, Isabel, Kiara, and many of the other students reflected a nationwide sentiment among high school history students that they want teachers to expose them to both the negative and positive aspects of American history so that they can identify where change is needed and feel informed to speak. For instance, protesting students in Jefferson County, Colorado, have

also argued that for history teachers to downplay the negative is dishonest and propagandizing (Fischer, 2015). Josephine, when discussing her growth after learning that Columbus was actually not "as good of a person as he was made out to be," said, "If you don't really know something well, you're not going to want to speak on it, really. So I became more comfortable because I knew the information now, so I can have more of a true perspective to look from" (Interview, April 6, 2015). These data suggests that the critical pedagogies used by these teachers to promote conscientization has helped students develop confidence and interest in history, skills in identifying social injustices, and appreciation for the value of these skills and knowledge.

At the same time, the participants in this study were generally forgiving of their former teachers. They chalked up discrepancies to teachers' desires to protect younger students' innocence, rather than to ideological motivations. Matt, however, did suspect that his teachers might have downplayed the atrocities of Jim Crow-era segregation due to their fear that the truth would incite resentment among Black students towards Whites:

> Matt: Most of my teachers have been putting more of a White side to [the Civil Rights Movement], instead of a uni—or a neutral side. So I've been learning that it's not as bad as people say it is. But now I know how it really is.
>
> Interviewer: What are some of the things—you don't have to name teachers' names—but some ways that they've taught about it?
>
> Matt: They've just—they put it as, not that they deserved it, but they just—it wasn't as bad. I don't know but they didn't fully describe what they went through. The violence and the oppression and stuff like that.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think they didn't go into that?
>
> Matt: I think it's because they were White—the teachers I had were White, and they just don't—they don't want to teach what really happened.
>
> Interviewer: What do you think some of their concerns might be if they teach what really happened?
>
> Matt: That Black people or African Americans will disrespect and not look up—or look

at White people the same.

Interviewer: Do you feel that Ms. Bowling takes that into consideration?

Matt: No. She definitely is more of a neutral person and I really like that about her. (Interview, April 28, 2015)

He went on to say of Ms. Bowling's teaching in general, "I believe she's teaching it [history] the right way. And I was taught not the right way before." Although not linking his past instruction to hegemonic defense of current racial hierarchies, Matt was beginning to form critiques of the mystifying effects of such instruction (McLaren, 2009). It is also quite possible that other students were skeptical of their White teachers' racial motives but reluctant to share this with me, a White researcher and former teacher. Perhaps Matt felt more comfortable because he, too, was White and thus less likely to be perceived as being prejudiced against Whites. Or perhaps now that students saw that some White teachers (i.e. Ms. Ray or Ms. Bowling) were willing to openly discuss the severity of racism past and present, they viewed prior teachers' decisions not as related to larger structural or hegemonic forces, but rather as idiosyncratic individual choices. To sum up, it appeared that some students had already been exposed to critical teaching of history, while many had not. Both groups were similar, however, in their beliefs that teachers should not minimize the negative or shameful aspects of American history.

**Critiquing Past Injustices**

The data presented in the prior section reveals that some students gained a deeper understanding of historical injustices such as Jim Crow-era segregation and Columbus's genocide of the Taino people while in Ms. Ray's and Ms. Bowling's classes. Admittedly, however, Ms. Ray told me after school one day that developing students' critiques of Columbus's actions (which they did through a mock trial) was "like shooting fish in a barrel" (after-class conversation, March 4, 2015), implying that his actions were blatantly deplorable.

When I asked students in interviews to describe any government decisions they disagreed with, the most common answers related to the Indian Removal Act/Trail of Tears, the internment of Japanese citizens during World War II, dropping the atomic bomb on Japan, and getting involved in wars they viewed as unnecessary.

The latter did not surprise me since they had recently learned about the questionable WMD rationale for invading Iraq, but I was curious why more mentioned mistreatment of Native Americans than the mistreatment of African Americans. I asked Ms. Ray, who also thought it was strange, but hypothesized, "There's a catchy name for it [the Trail of Tears], so that's helpful. And you know it's pretty clearly wrong, more so than other things"; however she was still baffled, saying "we spend probably one-tenth of the time on the Trail of Tears than we do talking about slavery" (Interview, September 29, 2015). Her other guess was that perhaps students did not think of slavery as a government decision and I agreed that perhaps I should have worded the question differently. Slavery might also be a topic they had learned more about outside of school and in prior courses, so the Trail of Tears became more salient, relatively, in their minds.

William, however, when discussing differences between his high school history course and previous social studies courses, highlighted slavery as a topic he was learning much more about:

> William: With slavery, it was like ten times worse than what I had already thought. And I already thought it was really really bad. So that's saying a lot.
>
> Interviewer: What are some of the things that you learned about that were even worse than what you had thought?
>
> William: Well I just learned how big it was. And how the discrimination even after slavery had ended, still continued for a really long time. And how people were just so public with lynchings and stuff.
>
> Interviewer: When you heard these details about history that were different from what you'd heard in the past, how did it make you feel?

William: It made me feel sad. For those people that were attacked. It also made me question the government. Like why aren't they doing anything? Because they're racist. (Interview, April 29, 2015)

William's ability to characterize the government as racist points perhaps to the effectiveness of Ms. Ray's strategy of calling out racism so that students would feel empowered to do the same (discussed at length later in this chapter). Other research on White students' characterizations of history have suggested that they often portray American democracy as equally protecting all citizens' rights (Epstein, 2000) and perceive "congruence between ideals and realities of life in the United States" (Rubin, 2007, p. 465). William, on the other hand, in both this segment as well as in his frequent in-class exclamations about actions being racist, suggested that critical pedagogy may help privileged students identify and name oppressive structures that would otherwise likely be invisible to them (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). In addition, Rubin (2007) argued that "frank discussion of power and privilege" (p. 474) in diverse classrooms can enhance students' civic identities. Although critical pedagogy texts often emphasize helping students name the sociopolitical realities that contribute to domination in the present (Freire, 1970; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; McLaren, 2009), Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling believed students needed an understanding of oppression throughout history in order understand present inequities.

## Conscientization of Present Injustices

In this section, which comprises the bulk of this chapter, I will interweave the data that illuminates students' conscientization and the data on the related pedagogical approaches. I think that by presenting these side-by-side, rather than in separate sections, readers will better be able to judge to what extent conscientization was related to the U.S. History class, and in what ways. Furthermore, it reflects my intention as described in the methods section to analyze the classroom as a whole, rather than the students and teachers separately from one another.

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**Overarching Belief That Society is Relatively Better Now**

Before delving into the ways in which students displayed conscientization of present injustices, I first want to present a theme that seemed to serve as a boundary around this conscientization. I discuss this theme at greater length in Chapter 6, describing it as a bottleneck to critical consciousness; however, I want to briefly introduce it here so that readers can keep in mind, as they read about conscientization, that this underlying belief was always in the background.

Although students could easily identify injustices from the past, many of their comments indicated a belief in progress, that the past is behind us, and that society learns from its mistakes. As Amina said, "We always come to a good place" (Interview, April 1, 2015). This commonly held assumption—which Gramsci might call common sense—bolstered by the belief that we learn history in school in order to prevent repeating the mistakes of the past, gives comfort in the implication that society must be improving. But the past does not in fact repeat itself, and the narrative of progress is a modernist one that has been widely questioned (Segall, 1999). Nevertheless, these students were still socialized into this narrative and thus interpreted U.S. actions as steps along the path toward greater freedom and rights for all. When I asked Amina if she thought the government has usually made good domestic decisions, she answered:

> I think it has, *eventually*. Like there's certain things that we think now should be a no-brainer, like segregation and things like that. It should have never happened in the first place. And it came to that. Even with voting rights and stuff, we [women] should have got that as soon as men got it. So we got it, but just not at the right time I think. I think we should've gotten it sooner. So I think we always come to a good place. But just, it could've happened faster. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

Melony stated that she believed progress has occurred in race relations because schools are now de-segregated. In class later that day she went on to learn that schools are actually more segregated now than they have been since school integration was implemented, and re-

segregation is on the rise (Levinson, 2012). Although this good sense, as Gramsci might have termed it, conflicted with her common sense understanding that segregation is over, we will see that rather than replacing the common sense, the good sense can exist simultaneously with it via contradictory consciousness.

A few students who believed in progress admitted that progress was very slow or that there would always be limits to how far society can progress. Roman, for instance, said that American society is progressing in terms of racism "just an inch every 5 years or so" (Interview, April 23, 2015). The following excerpt from Matt's interview conveys his reading that progress exists even though it will never be complete:

> Matt: We will never be -- I don't think we'll ever be 100% equal. There's always going to be something that's keeping some group of people oppressed.
>
> Interviewer: What makes you think that?
>
> Matt: (sighing) well I (sighs) –I don't really know. It's just something I feel. I don't know how to explain it.
>
> Interviewer: When you see things like the Civil Rights Movement and things like that in U.S. history does it make you feel like progress is happening or—
>
> Matt: Progress is definitely happening. I just feel like we'll never be 100%. But progress is definitely happening. (Interview, April 28, 2015)

The rest of this section examines the contemporary injustices students *did* acknowledge, but I open with this theme of belief in progress in order to convey the lens through which students acknowledged these injustices. In other words, although they were becoming increasingly aware of them, they may still have viewed them as obstacles that would inevitably be overcome.

## Racism as *the* Contemporary Injustice

Of the oppressive structures that shape contemporary society, racism was the one students most widely and frequently named. Although most students believed society was

progressing, two thought it was regressing in terms of racism. When I asked Kiya if she saw

racism as getting better, she responded:

> No. I think--honestly, I don't want to jinx it but I see us getting to another war with each
> other. Just with the world, with our own country. Just look at the media. There's so many
> things going on, I feel like people are just about to start having riots. Especially in
> Ferguson. I don't know if it's still going on or not. But when it first happened, like all
> them killings first happened, they were starting riots and all that. It's just getting
> dangerous. And it's starting to come closer and closer. (Interview, April 9, 2015)

Josephine said she believed the U.S. is doing a worse job protecting its citizens than it used to,

particularly when she considers the frequency of instances of police misconduct motivated by

race. She added,

> I'm pretty sure there's something being done. But the determination for it being done, I
> don't think many people really seem to care or to be dedicated to fixing it. So that's why I
> think it's getting worse. (Interview, April 6, 2015)

Both Kiya and Josephine were beginning to question the narrative of progress because they saw

that some communities such as Ferguson were just as segregated and economically

disadvantaged as they had been before the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. Furthermore, they

believed there should be stronger national responses to these issues, and viewed the lack of this

response as an indication that race relations would get worse, perhaps even resulting in war.

**Police brutality**. It is unsurprising that students would be critically aware of racism as

manifest in our criminal justice system given the year in which this study took place. During this

school year, nationwide protests for racial justice became common in response to the killing of

several unarmed black men by police after being suspected of minor crimes such as stealing

cigarillos or selling cigarettes. Between the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice,

Freddie Gray, and many others this year, some students began to question the reality of freedom

and justice for all.

In the fall semester, Ms. Ray's students had made #BlackLivesMatter posters which hung

on a bulletin board outside of her room for the remainder of the year. Both teachers spent class time discussing the decision not to indict Darren Wilson and the riots in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray. Later, when teaching about the 9/11 rescue efforts, Ms. Ray tacitly referred to students' opinions about recent police actions: "whatever we feel about their actions in 2015, people and police officers were running into the towers" (Class observation, April 28, 2015). Students indicated in their interviews that most were also receiving information about these cases from the news, social media, and their peers, though they ranged in how much information they had. Isabel and Lexa for instance, had not heard about the April 27 riots in Baltimore until Angela told them at lunch the following day.

Most students did view police brutality as a contemporary injustice, however. Kiya, Isabel, Dolores, and Melony all said as much in their interviews, and Angela discussed the additional problems of criminal sentencing and the lack of rehabilitation for prisoners. Melony, who otherwise made very few critical comments in her interview, said of police:

> They're more brutal than helpful these days. Like they'll rather kill you before they know if you actually have a weapon or if you're actually doing something wrong. Like they're just ready to shoot. Instead of trying to solve something. (Interview, April 2, 2015)

Kiya's answer to the very first interview question I asked her ("In general would you tell me a little about your general opinions about the US?") was:

> I figure it's a good place to come, but we still have our -- we still have a downside to the US. Like we say that we're welcoming, but we still are prejudiced towards different groups, like how the Ferguson case is, and all these other cases are starting to come out as people being racist. And racial profiling is very disturbing to me as being a Black female. And so I don't think it's fair that the people of color--their parents have to give them a talk on how to deal with police officers. I feel like police officers are there to protect us, not to hurt us. And yeah I just feel like the US isn't all that it's lived up to be. (April 9, 2015)

Her analysis reflects an awareness of the incongruity between what the police and the US are supposed to be, according to the dominant view, and the reality of police brutality and

intransigent inequality that contradict this common view.

Although many recognized that the criminal justice system in many ways contributes to *in*justice, some students interpreted this as an individual, rather than systemic problem. Isabel blamed the racism of individual cops, saying "I don't think it's the US's fault" (Interview, April 15, 2015). Melony also illustrated this point:

> I don't know if it's the U.S.'s fault-- I think it's just personally them. And them like discussing with others the plan. And they just all take the plan out. But I don't know if the U.S. is mainly causing it; I just think it's like certain people who don't know how to control themselves maybe. (Interview, April 2, 2015)

In my second interview with Ms. Ray (during which she was teaching a new cohort of students) I asked her if she thought students understood racism as a systemic problem, rather than a characteristic of individuals. She replied:

> I really hope so. I don't know that that was necessarily super clear from [their transcripts] other than like Amina who obviously gets it. But maybe that's because when I'm actively teaching now, I'm like "oh yeah they totally get it!" Like I literally wrote those two definitions of "individual prejudice" vs. "institutional racism" and defined them on the board last week. So I'm like, "Oh yeah totally! They get it." It's a good question. (Interview, September 29, 2015)

She went on to say that she wished they could spend more time on the Reagan era to discuss the consequences of the political ideology that dominated from that point on, adding "We talk about it in the Civil Rights Movement—you know the ideas of changing laws rather than changing people's minds. But I wish that I could say that I did more. I say that word [systemic] a lot, but I don't know if it's always understood" (Interview, September 29, 2015). The extent to which students were able to identify how forms of oppression were systemic rather than individual will be discussed further in Chapter 6. The following two sub-sections will detail Ms. Ray's and Ms. Bowling's approaches to teaching the police misconduct cases to share with the readers the learning experiences that may have shaped students' racial conscientization, as well as to build a

conceptual framework of critical pedagogy in U.S. History classes.

**Teaching Ferguson.** The decision not to indict Darren Wilson, the officer who killed an

unarmed Black 18-year old named Michael Brown, occurred before the start of this ethnography,

but both teachers described to me the class discussions following this decision, and Ms. Ray

emailed me the video she had made for her students the night of the decision. Ms. Ray made 10-

15 minute videos for her students to watch at home in preparation for the next day's class, and

that night she opened her video on Reconstruction with a three-minute statement about Ferguson.

In her introduction, she said,

> Before I start this video, which will be about the politics of Reconstruction, I want to
> address the historical moment that we're in as I record and as you watch. About 4 hours
> ago, a grand jury decided not to indict officer Darren Wilson in the killing of Michael
> Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Like many of you I am running through a range of
> emotions like this, from anger, to sadness, to hopelessness, to motivation to change the
> system, and back to sadness and despair. I recognize that society has granted me privilege
> as a White person to feel these things as empathy rather than a direct threat to my
> physical safety. I was amazed tonight as I watched protesters put their lives and bodies on
> the line to remain calm in the face of what seemed like astonishing injustice.
>
> This is how I felt as an American, and a human. As a teacher, my job is to try my best to
> shed light on how we got here. I have to ask us now, as a class, to investigate a time that
> should feel more distant by now. It should be more difficult, in 2014, for us to connect
> the failure of Reconstruction, the failure of white policymakers to ensure justice for Black
> and Brown Americans, to current events.

Ms. Ray made several pedagogical moves here. She modeled that White people can feel empathy

in instances like these even while they cannot ever fully understand what it is like to be a racial

minority in this country (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). She acknowledged and welcomed the

strong emotions, such as anger, sadness, and despair, that her students may be feeling in response

to the decision not to indict Wilson. And she reiterated that the goal of learning history is to

understand "how we got here," in the hopes that students would draw connections between the

failures of Reconstruction and the current racial realities in Ferguson and across the country.

In describing how the next day's lesson went, Ms. Ray lamented:

> That was a really rough day. That was the day first semester when I like dropped everything and just kind of did a lesson plan around, "How are you feeling about this? Do you know the story? Do you know the process and why they said this is what's going to happen? And like, how are you feeling?" It was almost like a therapy or to make sure everybody is on the same page about this day. And for some kids that was like exactly what they needed. They were so glad to get to talk about it and say their frustrations. For other kids, they just shut down. They were like, "I can't think about this right now. It's too much." (Interview, September 19, 2015)

This, among other teaching experiences, led Ms. Ray to conclude that conscientization can be too painful for some students and thus should not always be forced upon them:

> It can be a loss of innocence, a loss of idealism, to see current events happening that make you feel less safe. Like Josephine was saying [referring to Josephine's interview transcript]. Right to make you feel like the government does not exist for you. Or the police do not exist to protect you. That your life is not valued. (Interview, September 19, 2015)

This fear of traumatizing students led her to teach about the April Baltimore riots (discussed below) in a much more academic and depersonalized manner.

Ms. Bowling also described this day as "difficult," but in her case it was also because she had not had enough time to determine her stance on the decision. She explained,

> Because I didn't understand the facts, and I needed to know more definitively where I stood on it. But I didn't want them to not have the opportunity to express where they were. So that was a conversation that I kind of let them lead and I didn't play devil's advocate on because I didn't have enough information myself. And it was sort of just a dialogue. It wasn't necessarily a lesson. To be like, "This was wrong. And the government's wrong. And so on and so forth." But for them to analyze it through, well how in our judicial system did this play out? Kind of going through the timeline of what occurred. But me, like I was not necessarily silent, but I didn't really play that big of a role in that one. Simply because I didn't know where I stood in the whole scheme of things. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

The above quote serves as another example of a moment in which Ms. Bowling took the role Freire advocated of teacher-as-student. Although her stated reason was more related to her desire to delay choosing a side than to a desire to let the students be the teachers, the fact that "dialogue"

replaced a "lesson" in this case aligned with the critical pedagogy notion that the learning should be guided by the students' reading of the world (Freire, 1970). In addition, Ms. Bowling modeled that it is not always necessary or even desirable to form an opinion immediately. In many cases, such as this one, there are numerous complicated details to weigh before a person can settle on a fixed position, and even then it should be open to unfixing. This is consistent with her use of dialogue, as described in Chapter 4, not to help move toward a stance or decision, but rather to complicate students' thinking even if it moves them away from a settled position.

*Teaching Baltimore*. When the riots in Baltimore[13] occurred several months after those in Ferguson, both teachers again decided to devote class time to discussing the event, and both prepared a more structured lesson, perhaps after reflecting on what they would like to have improved when discussing Ferguson. The two teachers planned quite different lessons however, Ms. Ray focusing on other riots in Baltimore's history and Ms. Bowling addressing environmental racism and critical media literacy.

*Connecting past to present*. Ms. Ray spent the night of April 27 planning how to teach these events. She decided that, consistent with her stated goal of helping students "understand the historical grounding of why certain things are the way they are" (Interview, March 28, 2015), she would have students compare the current riots with the riots in Baltimore in 1861 and 1968. They completed a graphic organizer in which, for each year, they had to answer "What sparked the event?"; "What happened during the riot? List at least THREE details"; and "What does this event show about race relations in Baltimore at the time?" They then had to answer the following "Synthesis" questions:

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[13] On April 12, 2015, 25-year old Baltimore resident Freddie Gray died of an unexplained spinal cord injury while in a police car. On April 27, following Gray's funeral and weeks of receiving no explanation from the police department, residents began rioting; the next day schools were closed and a state of emergency was declared (Yan & Ford, 2015).

1. What connections do you see between these events? Is there a common thread or trend that ties them together?
2. How does your knowledge of what happened between these events help you understand them better?
3. "A riot is the language of the unheard." Does this quote from Martin Luther King apply to any of these events? Which, and how so? (If not, explain why not).
4. In your opinion, should looting and property damage be considered "violence?" Explain your answer. (Class handout, April 28, 2015).

Unfortunately class ended before students had finished, so there was no time for a whole-class discussion. As I walked around assisting students, I heard a few comments like, "I don't understand. Destroying your city is not going to help you." (Later Ms. Ray told me this inability to empathize with the rioters was rare from what she heard). Ms. Ray responded, "I didn't say it was a good strategy or a productive strategy. Only that people who are going to riot are people who are pushed to that point" (Class observation, April 28, 2015). Earlier in the class she had led a brief discussion on Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote, "A riot is the language of the unheard" in trying to help them understand why people might damage their own communities.

The most critically conscious statement made came from Ida, which was surprising because she was relatively uncritical in her interview, making statements such as that she thought America was the greatest country in the world. I should note here that Ida and I had known each other for almost two years at this point, through my work with College Connect, including spending three days together on a college tour trip. Based on my knowledge of her personality, I do not think Ida was moderating her opinions because she thought they might offend me. Rather, she seemed to hold a view that one should generally be polite and focus on the positive. I asked Ms. Ray for her interpretation of the disconnect between Ida's sunny interview responses and her more critical comments in class, to which she replied:

> It is completely possible that Ida was trying to be "respectful." I actually do see that come through in her interview and it doesn't surprise me at all. She is generally apologetic for offering views she thinks will be controversial or could offend (usually White) people.

She was one of the ones who at the beginning of the year told me her middle school teacher told her that "white" was a rude thing to call someone, and wanted her to use "Caucasian" instead. (e-mail follow-up communication, September 30, 2015)

Given this inclination towards politeness, it was particularly surprising when Ida asked, in apparent reference to the fact that life for many Baltimore residents was not much better than life under slavery, "Y'all think we will ever get back to slavery?" The following conversation ensued:

Ms. Ray: Will we ever have slavery again? [repeating Ida's question for clarification] You mean like legally sanctioned involuntary servitude?

Ida: Yeah, Yeah do you think that?

Ms. Ray: No!

Ida: Why you say it like that?

Ms. Ray: Because that's a very pessimistic way to think.

Kiara: How?

Ms. Ray: How is that pessimistic?

Kiara: Yeah?

Ms. Ray: Because pessimistic is thinking about the worst possible outcome. That seems like the worst possible outcome. (Class observation, April 28, 2015)

I took Ida's question as an incredibly insightful point, along the lines of those made in Michelle Alexander's (2012) book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. In it, Alexander argued that the American criminal justice system is not just racially biased, it is actually maintaining a racial caste system similar to that of the Jim Crow era. However, Ms. Ray, ever-fearful that students might have an oversimplified view that "nothing ever changes; everything stays the same" (Interview, March 28, 2015), worried that Ida was not grasping the nuances that distinguish slavery from current racial oppression. Perhaps Ms. Ray declined to

affirm Ida's question because she feared the logic behind the question underestimated the horrors of slavery, or because she wanted to protect her 16-year old students from worrying that such a horrendous future was possible, or perhaps both. I will return to the question of comforting students at the expense of politicizing them in Chapter 7.

 *Teaching critical media literacy.* Ms. Bowling chose not to take a comparative historical approach, but rather focus on analyzing media images for how they were shaping public opinion about this event. She asked students to compare four media photographs which she projected: two on the left showing a church clergy peacefully marching and a young boy handing a police officer a water bottle, versus two on the right showing people looting and cars burning. Students were able to identify the contrasting impacts of the images and recognize which the media more commonly displayed. Jaia noted, "I would say the right side is a negative message, but it's like that's mostly what we see. Cuz I didn't see the church" (Class observation, April 29, 2015).

 However, many student comments that followed focused more on the ramifications of the looting than they did on the media's perpetuation of racism through their choices of which images to share. Isabel stated, "They're making their race look bad, first of all. And they're proving to the cops that their race is bad so they have the right to arrest them." Kiya said, "Like you said it takes away from the message. Like the reason he died basically was racial profiling and so what they're doing—it has no—it doesn't make sense. You're stealing stuff because somebody got killed" (Class observation, April 29, 2015). As mentioned in Chapter 4, Ms. Bowling preferred not to correct or personally contradict statements her students made, relying instead on other students to raise counterpoints. No one did in this case, so the discussion moved onto a new topic without any opposing argument like that made by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015), "When nonviolence is preached by the representatives of the state, while the state doles out

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heaps of violence to its citizens, it reveals itself to be a con" (para. vi).

   *Teaching environmental racism.* The next images Ms. Bowling projected were maps of

the racial distribution across Baltimore and a map showing the distribution of vacant buildings.

She then asked the class, "If you put these two maps together what do you start to notice?"

(Class observation, April 29, 2015). Students responded that more vacant buildings appeared in

the Black communities, and Kiya added, "Because people tend to look at--well Black

neighborhoods are probably the ones with the highest poverty and highest crime rates." Ms.

Bowling added,

> You could say this about Douglass [our city] as well. Every day you turn on the news
> there's another person from the African American community between 25 and 54 that's
> being incarcerated—that shot somebody who shot somebody. It's playing out right here.
> (Class observation, April 29, 2015)

She went on to explain that, historically, the primary industry of Douglass resulted in factories

and warehouses being built downtown. She went on,

> Ms. Bowling: Well once people start to live there for awhile, they start to realize they
> don't want to live in environments where pollution is high, because factories are
> producing a lot of pollution, they want their kids to have areas to run around, they want
> safer environments. So what do they do?
>
> Julio: Move out.
>
> Ms. Bowling: They move out to the outskirts, and they travel in. The communities that
> stay are the ones that don't have the means to move out. And it's still true today. There's
> segregation that still happens today but it's not legal segregation by law, it's by money
> right? (Class observation, April 29, 2015)

Here she briefly introduced the concepts of ghettoization and de facto segregation, key concepts

for understanding contemporary and local race relations. This sparked Jaia to make a connection

to her observations of this pattern in her own neighborhood in Douglass:

> I used to stay in the west end and . . . the west end is supposed to be the area for most of
> the Bloods or whatever. And I'm like ok that's cool, but I would see White people
> walking around and it's like White people would live on the outside of the neighborhood

where I stayed, like on the main street and around. It's supposed to be the ghetto so why would [there be] White people? And I had to think about it because it's like the Black people are in the middle. They were in a few streets away from my house. But [major university] was right here, and it was like they were all around. (Class observation, April 29, 2015)

These sorts of opportunities for students to connect to and reflect on their own experiences outside of school do not often occur in classes focused on history, but are a cornerstone of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and urban critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). They also legitimize the good sense students acquire from lived experience that often conflicts with common sense ideas, such as that we live in a post-racial society (Dawson & Bobo, 2009).

**Racist nativism**. Other than the criminal justice system, the only other way students commonly recognized racism in the US was in the treatment of immigrants. For instance, no mention was made of environmental racism, the re-segregating of schools, employment discrimination, or the many other ways institutional racism is manifest in American society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). Isabel, Amina, and Dolores (all of whom had parents or grandparents who had emigrated from another country) described how immigrants are discriminated against in the US. Amina explained that her Jamaican grandmother was "targeted because of her accent, and just the music she listened to, and she smelled like curry and stuff like that" (Interview, April 1, 2015). When I asked Dolores what her general opinions of the US were, she described both discrimination against undocumented immigrants and against Latin@s:

> Dolores: Well, hmm. I like living here. But since my parents are um illegal immigrants I feel like they don't have enough rights. But I as a citizen, I feel um somewhat welcome and with enough rights for myself.
>
> Interview: What makes you say, "somewhat welcome"?
>
> Dolores: Since I am Hispanic, sometimes I don't feel like welcomed. Or like I'm discriminated because of my ethnicity.

Interview: Would you mind sharing any examples that you're thinking about?

Dolores: Um, hm. Well I don't have any specific examples, but I feel like mm, like I'm underestimated sometimes. Either I don't know--I don't know if it's a stereotype or it is, but I feel like I'm underestimated, like maybe because I'm Hispanic I'm not as smart or intelligent, when I know I am. (Interview, April 14, 2015)

Students with families who had recently immigrated were not the only ones aware of the problem, however. When I asked students during interviews if they thought the US equally protected all citizens, Matt, Kiya, and Angela all said no and gave immigrants as their first example. Angela's full response was:

Angela: No. As far as immigrants, no. I mean they shelter murderers and thieves and stuff like that more than they actually take care of immigrants. They treat immigrants as if they were criminals in that they're going to harm someone. Which is ridiculous.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about what you mean by treat them as criminals?

Angela: So immigrants have to go through this long process of—to get into this country they have to study. They have to look at their whole records of health. . . But they just go through this long process, and when they're here they're just here and they have to bust their butt to get work. While criminals, you know, if they go out and kill somebody, they just got a hot meal. A bed. Medical. And so forth. Which is crazy. (Interview, April 13)

It is interesting that students referred to immigrants, documented or not, as *citizens* in their answers to my question—deserving of the same equal protection as native-born Americans. This indicates they may define *citizen* less in terms of legal status than in terms of deserving certain protections in alignment with universal human rights (Subedi, 2010). After reading her students' transcripts, Ms. Bowling expressed surprise at how many students said immigration was an issue they would change, adding:

Ms. Bowling: I don't think that all of them had an immigrant perspective from the beginning. Did Matt talk about immigration too?

Interviewer: I think so.

Ms. Bowling: Like he's one that surprised me because I wouldn't think that he would

necessarily care. (Interview, September 26, 2015)

Some students used the term *immigrant* when they actually meant *undocumented immigrant*, even students with family members who were immigrants. For example, Isabel said of her uncle, "I just know he was an immigrant. He didn't have his green card or any of that" and "I just know they sent him back because he was an immigrant" (Interview, April 15, 2015). Matt's statements revealed the same confusion:

> Matt: They definitely don't equally protect immigrants. And I know that's a major problem.
>
> Interviewer: can you tell me more about that?
>
> Matt: I know that you can be deported and that they come to this country for opportunities that they don't have. And sending them back is just making it worse for them and their family. And it's ruining our economy, which is a big problem. (Interview, April 28, 2015)

As an aside, it is interesting that Matt integrates in his argument both empathy for struggling families as well as an appeal to American economic interests. This may reflect his upbringing in a conservative household in that he draws on both reasoning that aligns with his current progressive views as well as the conservative views that might appeal to his family and others in his community.

Some students lumped together the struggles of immigrants throughout history with those of African Americans. For instance, when discussing Langston Hughes' poem, "A Dream Deferred," Gisel (a Mexican-American) said, "back then it was really hard for a certain group of people –um to follow their dreams or even to make it happen so I think that's why he might be talking about it." When Ms. Bowling asked her to clarify "certain groups of people," she answered, "You know like immigrants or African Americans" (Class observation, March 12, 2015).

This conflation may have partly arisen from the way the topic was discussed in Ms. Bowling's class. After she told me how she teaches about discrimination towards immigrants throughout history, through the Chinese Exclusion Act for example, I asked her if she would link these to current anti-immigrant sentiments and actions. She responded,

> Yeah, because I think at that point, or somewhere that year a lot of people were irritated with Obama for allowing all of these immigrant children to stay in the US. And that came up and so we were talking about kind of, is this ok? Why is it not ok? And then I talked to them about how after World War II we needed people to work in the farms or like picking produce. And how afterwards we wanted them out of our country and how we have this sort of flip flop relationship. And right now it's negative. But that doesn't mean in 30 years when we need something we aren't going to open up our borders and tell people to come in. When it benefits us. So yeah, it [discussions of current immigration issues] kinda streamed through. And I think the other thing that helped--at the end of each unit they had that table they had to fill out with themes. And I think they kept seeing that immigrants kept popping up on like achieving the American Dream, who has power, who's still fighting for power. And immigrants were constantly in those boxes. So I think getting them to realize through the entire course, this group of people is still struggling. (Interview, September 26, 2015)

These discussions did seem to raise students' awareness of the unjust contemporary treatment of many immigrants, judging by the number that mentioned mistreatment of immigrants as a problem in the US. However, the discussions also did not tease out that undocumented immigrants face particular hardships that other immigrants do not (Rong, Dávila, & Hilburn, 2011), leaving students with an interest in improving conditions for undocumented immigrants without an awareness that this is the particular group for whom they are concerned.

In addition, the unit-summation tables referenced in Ms. Bowling's quote above always had students list groups who were still struggling to achieve the American dream during whichever historical period was being studied. The answers (which were always African Americans, immigrants, women, and Native Americans) became so repetitive that perhaps students began mentally lumping them together under a category like *the marginalized* or *the oppressed*. So when they analyzed a text calling for equality, such as Langston Hughes' "A

Dream Deferred," it seemed logical that it would be calling for equality of all oppressed people, rather than highlighting the struggle of a particular group. Perhaps in the weeks following my observations, when students learned about the distinct social movements of the 1960s, such as the Chicano and Red Power movements, they would begin to conceptualize struggles for equality as unique from one another.

Nevertheless, the fact that several students recognized the unequal treatment of immigrants as an issue reveals some degree of conscientization in this area. They recognized the inhumanity of deporting individuals or families back to dangerous situations (e.g. Matt) and the harsh realities that face immigrants as they attempt to make a livelihood in a new country (e.g. Angela). Although not using the term *confl,* second/third-generation immigrant students like Amina and Dolores were beginning to articulate this concept in their observations of the mistreatment of people who do not fit the White, English-speaking, Christian expectation of what it means to be "American" (Perez Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez, & Solórzano, 2008). When Dolores related that her intelligence is often underestimated, she lent support to research documenting the ways cultural stereotypes cast Latina students as academically lower-performing and intending to start families rather than pursue higher education (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Ek, 2009; Vetter, Fairbanks, & Ariail, 2011).

Consciousness of racist nativism seemed to arise largely from students' personal experiences; however, the teachers also supported critiques of racist nativism within the classroom. Ms. Bowling would tell her students,

> Immigration is awesome because if you're not 100% Native American then you can't claim to be 100% American. Because you are a product of someone that came here at some point in time. Whether they wanted to, or they didn't. . . So getting them to see well why are you so anti-immigration right now, when someone in your family got that opportunity to come here? (Interview, April 3, 2015)

Both teachers taught the racist nativism underlying the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Ms. Ray had students analyze documents showing how Chinese and Japanese Americans were stereotyped during this time. Although she told students the documents were "blatantly racist," she scaffolded by reminding them of some of the strategies that were used to promote discrimination against African Americans through Sambo and Pickaninny images they studied earlier in the year, e.g., "of dehumanizing, of taking away individualism, of exaggerating a particular characteristic" (Class observation, March 18, 2015). In this way she taught not only *that* racism operated at this time, but also *how* it operated—the specific strategies used to suppress groups, namely dehumanizing and essentializing. As a result, the U.S. History class may have helped students make more sense of their lived experiences with racist nativism and racism in general.

**Racial conscientization: Summary.** When I asked students, "Do you think the US equally protects all citizens?", all fourteen said "No" or "Not 100%." When asked to expand, most students mentioned immigrants, police brutality, or racism more broadly. Only one of the fourteen interviewed did not bring up race as a problem currently facing the US (Feisty). No other group was referenced nearly as consistently, with sexual minorities and Muslims being the next most-referenced (four students mentioned each). Only one student brought up the homeless, none mentioned the poor or working class generally, and no one cited other disempowered groups such as women, people with disabilities, or religious minorities other than Muslims.

Given the prevalence of racial oppression throughout U.S. history and thus the curriculum (at least in these classes)—from colonization and the systematic removal of Native Americans, to slavery and its legacies, to the theft of Mexican territory and racist nativist policies towards Latin Americans, Japanese, and Chinese immigrants and even natural-born citizens—it

is perhaps not surprising that students would be able to name racism. Both teachers had also believed it was important for students to understand this theme of U.S. history in order to understand the problems that currently face our society. In return, students did not become disaffected but rather said they trusted their teachers more *because* they were honest about contemptible elements of the country's past.

The teachers and I recognized that, as tragic and disturbing as the police brutality cases this year were, they did open up opportunities for the classes to discuss the ways that racism still operates, ways that are often neglected in the public discourse. When I asked Ms. Bowling to identify some assets for teaching critical consciousness, she referenced, among other things, these cases that brought racial inequality into the public discourse: "I don't want to say that current events are an asset, but some of the things that were going on were so relevant to the curriculum and so relevant to the civil rights movement and whether or not the civil rights movement is still going on" (Interview, September 26, 2015). She hesitated to call them an asset, fearing that would indicate she was glad these incidents happened, but she highlighted how she saw these opportunities as beneficial for both her African American students and other students:

> I mean for a lot of those students in there that have experienced racism, for them to be able to have an environment where they could express how hard it is for them to be African American. I think that was really good for other students—One, for them, and two, for other students to realize that. Because that's not something I ever realized when I was in high school. And I don't think you ever will realize that unless you see it happen. And so for students to kind of give their experiences, that's huge. (Interview, September 26, 2015)

Ms. Ray, on the other hand, was conflicted about how to hold such potentially painful discussions:

> I mean we talked about Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Michael Brown all at once. But you know. That wasn't a good day. Like I really rethought doing it that way because there were some kids who were processing it really privately or just didn't want--it was just like, you can't have group therapy. Everyone needed different things. And for some people

that was actually really bad. And some people had -- are Students of Color who have parents who are police officers. It was just like it made it really messy. It needed to be more individualized and less discussion. Or I don't know. (Interview, September 19, 2015)

Even if I had observed that day, I would be unable to say if the conversations about these cases had a net positive or negative effect on the students, but the prior literature and interview data suggest that students appreciate "frank discussions of issues of power and privilege" (Rubin, 2007, p. 474) and become more civically engaged as a result of them.

Class discussions of racism were not limited to the days focusing on Ferguson and Baltimore, however. After my observations ended, Ms. Bowling showed *The House I Live In*, a highly critical documentary about how the war on drugs has created a caste system that replicates slavery in many ways. I asked her if she thought the film or the class in general helped students see that racism is a power structure, rather than a characteristic of individuals. She replied, "I don't know if the *House That I Live In* achieved everything that I wanted it to with them because I think a lot of it flew over their heads," explaining that students focused more on the irrationality of the mandatory minimums and maintenance of laws that are clearly not accomplishing what they were intended for (Interview, September 26, 2015). But she also added,

> I think they started to realize that--I don't want to say that the cards are stacked against certain people--but I think by the end of the class they started to realize that the cards were stacked. And there's always a consistent handful of groups that are at a disadvantage. And I don't know if they necessarily--I mean I think African American kids think that because they've experienced it. But the White kids I think they--there might've been some guilt, White guilt in there. And granted I didn't care because it's just like, it is what it is, right? But I think they left having more of a well-rounded understanding of how society is working and how—the way the laws are established, the way that things are enforced. Some groups are at disadvantage just from the color of their skin. (Interview, September 26, 2015)

Although both teachers briefly mentioned a concern about White guilt, if students come to an understanding of racism as structural and power as operating through—rather than simply

deployed by—people (Gramsci, 1971), then the guilt could be replaced with a determination to act in allied solidarity (Bettez, 2011). Some comments from White students such as Matt showed a small movement toward such solidarity, but the intentions to politically engage were limited, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### Structures Not Yet Critiqued: Sexism, Neocolonialism, and Capitalism

Students' abilities to recognize the ways in which sexism, neocolonialism, and capitalism produce and maintain power imbalances were less developed as compared to their abilities to identify how racism does so. In the following section I analyze data from class observations and student interviews in order to present initial interpretations of why these power structures may have been more difficult to read and critique.

**Sexism**

Although four students denounced discrimination against sexual minorities (Amina, Roman, Kiya, and Feisty)—through the denial of same-sex marriage rights for example—the only times students mentioned oppression of women in their interviews was in the context of describing how the US is a better place to live than many countries because there are more legal protections for women. Angela, for instance, stated,

> Overall I'm fine living in the U.S. Because I would not--I would really hate to live in some developing or third world country where women cannot speak. I like speaking. I like having rights. And I don't want to get abused. Like for example in Cambodia, for like domestic violence, as long as the man doesn't draw blood, you're good. You won't get charged for it. And I found that pretty messed up. (Interview, April 13, 2015)

Discussions in class revealed objectification thinking on the part of the young men (Nussbaum 1995) and internalized sexism on the part of the young women. The discussion of women's wardrobe choices, quoted in Chapter 4, demonstrates how some of the young men in Ms. Bowling's class either believed or pretended to believe (perhaps to get attention) that women

should dress provocatively "because that's what guys like" (Brice, class observation, March 13, 2015). Even though some female students criticized women who wear revealing clothing, they blamed women, rather than patriarchy. Kiya for instance stressed, "I'm not saying it's the boys' fault. It's just the way girls present themselves" (Class observation, March 13, 2015). Both sexes perceived the matter as a personal choice, made by individual women free from any internalized notions of their bodies as serving the purpose of attracting men (Nussbaum, 1995).

I observed only one moment in Ms. Bowling's class in which a student (Angela) spontaneously expressed a reading of sexism. Unfortunately, it was immediately followed by comments from both male and female students that would qualify as what Rae Langton (2009) called a reduction to appearance:

> Angela: I was going to say something about the Rosie the Riveter poster. It's sexist. it shows that women are strong but in the picture she's wearing lots of makeup. And so in a way it's saying, there's men controlling them saying ok you can do whatever you want but you have to look a certain way while you're doing it.
>
> Kevin: Makeup can do a lot for a woman.
>
> Jaia: True.
>
> Kevin (looking indignant in response to Ms. Bowling's displeased expression): I wasn't even trying to be funny.
>
> Lexa: But makeup, if you wear it too much, like for a long period of time—
>
> Kiya: It will make your skin wrinkle.
>
> Lexa: It will kinda change and you look different without makeup. Probably you look worse. (Class observation, April 8, 2015)

Both male and female students placed utmost importance on the appearance of women, finding the only problem with makeup to be that it might eventually diminish a woman's beauty.

Both teachers, like myself, taught about sexism primarily in the context of lessons on the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, and the second-

wave feminist movement of the 1960s-1970s. These two teachers also taught gender roles of the 1950s to explain the circumstances leading to the rise of feminism in the 1960s. Both coincidentally used the same text to teach this lesson: an excerpt from the 1955 "Good Wife's Guide," from *Housekeeping Monthly* (see Appendix D for the handout used in both classes). This included advice for wives such as "Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking." In both classes, students made some comments indicating they were not recognizing the ways in which the list reflected a highly sexist view of women as existing primarily in order to serve men's needs. In Ms. Ray's class, Michelle said, "I understand 'make him comfortable after coming home from a long day of work.' I understand that" (March 26, 2015) and in Ms. Bowling's class, several students expressed approval of individual pieces of advice, including Lexa who said, "I could see [number] two because I really don't want anyone to see me in my bad stage" (April 13, 2015).

Ms. Ray guided her students to better grasp the overall impact this and other such popular media might have on people by asking, "What kind of box does this put women into?" and later "What kind of box does it put men into?" (March 26, 2015). To the first question, Michelle responded, "They can't even have their own thoughts. They're only supposed to live for their man basically" and a male student answered, "That they're not able to fulfill their own desires and dreams." They did not have an explicit conversation about how this demonstrates systemic, rather than individual, sexism; however at least one student, Amina, was conscious of the systemic nature of sexism to some extent. When Ms. Ray mentioned that the author is unknown, several students guessed it was a man, but Amina stated, "Even if it's written by a woman it's still written by a man." No one responded, however, so I am not sure how many heard or understood her comment. Nevertheless, she showed here some tacit understanding of the way

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hegemony operates through consent of the dominated group (Gramsci, 1971). Ms. Ray translated the lesson on sexist ideology to today's context by having students analyze contemporary advertisements for examples of sexism. Some students had an easier time identifying sexist messages than others. For instance, Michelle had trouble doing so with the following advertisement:



*Illustration 1.* Advertisement taken from Ms. Ray's class materials (April 24, 2015)

She did not notice the ad's implication that men pay for their wives' clothing, nor that women spend their husband's money in ways that would upset them.

There may be several reasons for the relative difficulty students had reading sexism as opposed to reading racism. Perhaps students can more easily recognize racism than sexism because mistreatment of women in the US never included the legally sanctioned acts of internment, slavery, or segregation. The theme of racial/ethnic oppression arises much more frequently in the typical history curriculum than the theme of sexism does. Contemporary subordination of women is comparatively more hidden, manifesting itself more in psychological and emotional effects than in the more observable acts of eradication, segregation, or deportation (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Several students also mentioned that women are treated better in

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the US than in other countries, an example of justification via comparison that will also be apparent in their difficulty critiquing capitalism and discussed further in Chapter 6. It is also possible that students concluded that, having already gained suffrage, second-wave feminism succeeded in attaining the remaining rights desired, such as equal salaries and access to traditionally male-oriented jobs such as armed forces positions.

Pedagogical differences between dialogues on racism and those on sexism may also have played a role. For one, racism was more frequently discussed during the ten weeks in which I observed. Both teachers set aside time to discuss contemporary racism after the events in Ferguson and Baltimore, whereas such aside instruction did not occur in response to any high-profile examples of contemporary sexism. Both teachers did raise points regarding contemporary sexism, however. Ms. Ray asked students to identify examples in advertisements, while Ms. Bowling—who often showed short YouTube videos to give students a mental break—chose one that illustrated how photo enhancement alters images of women so dramatically that the resulting depiction would be impossible. However, these two examples represented a relatively small proportion of class time as compared to the time dialoguing about race.

In many ways the women were demonstrating what Antonio Gramsci called "contradictory consciousness" (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 9). More influential perhaps than the comparatively invisible oppression of women throughout history is the comparative invisibility of sexism in the news and pop culture media, which arguably shape students' thinking more than formal education does.

**Neocolonialism**

Given that students had studied the US's imperialistic actions not only during the early 20th century in Hawaii, Latin America, and the Philippines just to name a few, but also

throughout the century in southeast Asia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, I expected students to critique these specific actions when I asked how they felt about U.S. foreign policy decisions. Instead, most answered generally that they thought the US involved itself too much in other nations' "problems" and that instead the government should first focus on problems at home.

Interestingly, many students framed neocolonial actions as "helping" other countries. For instance, Josephine said, "I don't quite understand why we go and try to help other people when we don't have ourselves together first. I feel like that's kind of hypocritical, and I just don't really agree with that" (Interview, April 6, 2015) and Feisty commented,

> Whenever something bad happens the US is the first to step in and try to fix it even though it's not our problem. That kind of thing. Like with the Korean War, we just like step in. It's like it's our responsibility. But it's not our responsibility because we can barely handle ourselves right now. (Interview, April 22, 2015)

Thinking of such actions as "helping" or "fixing" may explain why students may not view these actions as necessarily imperialistic. Even though students disagree with such interventions, they do so not out of concern for the people of other nations but rather out of concern for Americans. For instance, Matt criticized the decision to intervene in Vietnam because "it just it didn't work out obviously. Nothing changed. The country stayed the same. We just lost lives and money. And resources. For nothing" (Interview, April 28, 2015).

At the same time that students perceived such foreign involvements as neglecting the needs of Americans, some also saw the actions as intended to benefit Americans, even while claiming to benefit others. Citing Rwanda as an example of inaction, Amina pointed out that U.S. decisions are based on self-interest: "I think when they have something to gain for it, they're very into like foreign affairs. But then if it's not beneficial to America or American citizens, they don't do anything" (Interview April 1, 2015). Referring to the Marshall Plan, Ida explained, "I know when you help it's kind of like you wash my back, I'll wash yours. So we still looking for

something in return, but then at the same time we definitely still helping someone in a horrible situation [sic]" (Interview, April 2, 2015). Unlike Amina, Ida insinuated that acting out of self-interest may be justifiable if others are benefiting as well.

In the students' and teachers' defense, all but one of my interviews with Ms. Bowling's students were conducted before her lessons on the Vietnam War, and all but one of my interviews with all students were conducted before either class's lessons on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. After learning about these blatant intrusions on other sovereign nations under the pretense of protecting democracy, students may have become more critical towards American neocolonialism. Students had already expressed some disapproval of installing US-approved leaders without the consent of the citizens of the country. For instance in discussing recent events in Egypt, Alex said,

> Alex: But the United States automatically tried and like -- It's not bad -- but they like pushed democracy and tried to put their own leader in there. Which people didn't like that much either, because it pretty much gave no point to their rebellion. If the US is just going to stick whoever they wanted in there.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think that that's a justifiable reason to interfere in other countries, is to push democracy?
>
> Alex: Um, like I think democracy is a great thing, but I feel like the countries should be able to decide who their leaders are. As opposed to the US coming in saying, "This person would make a great leader," so we're going to kind of push him into office like that. (Interview, April 21, 2015)

Feisty echoed this sentiment, using her fingers to make air quotes around the word *democracy*: "Well, especially with imperialism how we just kind of take over to protect *democracy*. And now we do the same thing. But now I just view it more as US power, instead of protecting democracy" (Interview, April 22, 2015).

These two examples suggest that some students were beginning to find flaws with imperialistic actions such as disregarding the sovereignty of other nations; however they did not

view these actions as comparable to early 20th-century imperialism since we do not "take land too much from other people anymore" (Amina, Interview, April 1, 2015). Diane, Roman, and Feisty mentioned that the US is not liked by other countries, indicating a burgeoning understanding of one negative impact of these decisions, at least on the US. The most common theme was a concern that foreign entanglements are bad for America—that interfering in other countries when "we can barely handle ourselves" (Feisty, Interview, April 22, 2015) is both hypocritical (Josephine, Interview, April 6, 2015) and worsens problems here (Diane, Interview, April 8, 2015). However no one took the perspective of a critical global citizen concerned with the well being of people in other nations beyond the US (Noddings, 2005; Subedi, 2010). Perhaps this is a result of the course's focus on history from the perspective of Americans. A world history course might better facilitate viewing American actions from the perspectives of people in other countries. Nevertheless, the abovementioned student critiques of US actions in Korea, Vietnam, Egypt, and Rwanda reveal a budding critical consciousness related to American neocolonialism.

**Capitalism**

In terms of economic oppression, students found fault with the way the poor are treated in the US and to some extent income inequality, but did not link these to a wider critique of capitalism. Before delving into their understandings of economic structures, it may be helpful first to consider how students identified themselves in terms of socioeconomic status (SES). I did not ask this question directly, but based on the general tone of their comments on the poor and social mobility, most students did not seem to identify themselves as of a lower SES. Only one, Dolores, used a first-person pronoun when discussing the poor: "we still don't get enough help from the government" (Interview, April 14, 2015). The remainder talked about the poor as other,

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and some conflated the poor with the homeless. The latter suggests a simplified understanding of class structures in the US. Most students showed a weak understanding of the relations between class and power in the US. Their comments generally reflected three interconnected themes: wealth inequality, social mobility, and classism. The following sections elaborate on each.

**Acknowledgment of wealth inequality**. Most students agreed that the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States is a problem. However, some had not yet gained the information or language that might help them imagine realistic solutions to this problem. None expressed overt bootstrap thinking, such as proposing that the poor should work harder to scale the economic ladder, or that the poor are in this position due to their own lack of motivation or determination. At the same time however, many comments did reflect beliefs in meritocracy, such as the statement that it would be unfair to expect the rich to share their wealth since they had "worked hard for it" (Alex, Class observation, March 19, 2015) and "definitely deserve it" (Ida, Interview, April 2, 2015). The materialistic thinking students expressed at other points in the semester suggested that perhaps underlying these opinions was a desire to keep the wealth they expect to accumulate eventually. This is one example of the hegemony of the American dream ideology: even while students outwardly called it a myth (discussed in the next section), they unconsciously imagined their future selves as rich and based their present attitudes about wealth redistribution on this fantasy.

Since the affluent class cannot be expected to share wealth, in the students' minds, the responsibility to "take care of the poor" falls on the government. The question of how the government would finance this was something the students often did not seem to consider until I directly asked them. When asked, some said through taxes, but I am unsure if they realized this likely requires sharing on the part of the rich. The belief that the government had no obligation to

assist the poor was labeled (and denounced) by the students as "Social Darwinism" (Class observation, April 24, 2015). This serves as an example of how knowledge of U.S. history can give students language for social justice-based critique. The most common recommendation for how the government should better assist the poor was through providing jobs and education, since these would be "more effective than just giving them money or something" (Amina, interview, April 1, 2015).

Ms. Bowling's students in particular also thought the welfare system needed to be reformed—though not reduced—because the potential for abrupt cutoffs of assistance would incentivize people not to get jobs. This opinion seemed to be formed or perhaps reinforced during a Great Depression lesson. Several students brought the lesson up in their interviews, so it evidently had a powerful effect on their thinking. In it, Ms. Bowling explained that, since a family has to earn under a certain amount in order to qualify for welfare, if they start earning even a penny over that amount, they lose government assistance. Her hopes were that this lesson would counter common criticisms levied at welfare recipients for "living off the government dole" for example. She closed by telling students:

> Why would I work more and then lose all of this? So you can't get mad at the families, because they're are actually pretty smart. They're thinking economically. You have to get mad at the system, at the policies that are designed that support a program like this. (Class observation, March 20, 2015)

This lesson particularly resonated with Isabel, who said in her interview that this sudden cutoff happened to her mother. While students then expressed in their interviews this same defense of recipients who choose not to find employment, some still thought the change would need to occur in the individual recipients rather than in the system. In referring to a person who receives welfare, Kiya said, "You should want to move forward in life, instead of depending on somebody for something" (Interview, April 9, 2015). Three students (including one in Ms. Ray's

class) used the phrase "taking advantage" in their interviews in reference to welfare recipients, reflecting an internalization of the dominant ideology that welfare systems reward laziness.

Amina's interview served as an exception to the rest in several ways. She stated,

> We're America. You know we were built on capitalism and all that stuff. You know we're rags-to-riches, all that stuff. So they [the government] don't want to infringe on people's rights to make money. Or to be successful. But the more you help the people at the bottom, the greater the chance of the whole country being successful together. Instead of 3% and 97%. So, I guess they don't want to take that dream away from people, that you can make $3 million if you come to America. But it's still not right. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

Unlike many of her peers, Amina understood that closing the wealth gap would require the rich to pay higher taxes. But she also understood that the reason this does not happen in the U.S. is because of our capitalist system and "rags-to-riches" ideology. She critiqued this ideology, putting air quotes around "dream." When I asked why she used air quotes, she explained,

> Because I think it's a dream. It's not reality at all. Because I know a lot of immigrants and both my grandparents were immigrants, like on both sides of my family. From opposite sides of the world. And it's a dream. Just because you come to America doesn't mean you're going to be a millionaire. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

As we will see in the next section, although many students agreed the American dream is a myth, unlike Amina few recognized that it is capitalist ideology that perpetuates this myth.

**The myth of social mobility and intersections with racism and nativism**. Although conscious or unconscious belief in the American dream is a pillar of capitalist ideology, most of these students saw at least this particular pillar as deceptive. Following is an excerpt from Roman's interview:

> Interviewer: So do you believe in the American Dream idea that hard work gets you a good position in life?
>
> Roman: No.
>
> Interviewer: Can you tell me more why you say no?

Roman: Honestly because even though hard-working people work hard every day, still they are stuck in the same spot. Unless you have friends who could boost you, or you make connections, or in some cases you make a deal with the devil, you aren't going to really get to where you thought your dreams would take you.

Interviewer: What do you mean by make a deal with the devil?

Roman: If you have to do something illegal. (Interview, April 23, 2015)

Students' skepticism toward the American dream may be in part due to witnessing family members struggle to climb the socioeconomic ladder; however questioning the myth is also actually promoted in these schools. Both in history and English classes, they discussed whether the dream is possible. Students in both classes (and in many 11th grade classes across the country) read *The Great Gatsby*, a major theme in which is the American dream. Feisty reported that her English teacher asked them about this ideology and whether they were proud to be American. Ms. Bowling, at the end of each unit, asked students to answer a question about which groups struggled to achieve the American dream during the time period studied, and which groups did not. Their answers began to sound conditioned, always consisting of some combination of: "immigrants, African Americans, women, Native Americans (and to the second question: "rich white men")—as if the answers were so obvious that the question did not warrant asking. I wondered if their almost rote responses desensitized them to the suffering of these groups throughout history and into the present.

While they were not yet connecting social immobility to capitalism, they did see some ways in which prejudice prevents mobility. For instance, Amina said, "Like it's like more common for maybe a poor white person, even if they are American already, to become rich than a poor immigrant that came from a country" (Interview, April 1, 2015). She actually thought discrimination based on nationality is a greater barrier to social mobility than racism is:

I think it's definitely more common that you see like maybe a poor, let's say a poor black

person . . . would you know grow up poor, and then get good grades, get good SAT scores, go to college, and then they'll have a good-paying job and stuff like that. I think it's more common for Americans who are not white to have a rags-to-riches story than immigrants. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

She went on to explain that she thinks people discriminate against others if they have an accent or different cultural customs and gave the example of her Jamaican grandmother's struggle to maintain employment due to such discrimination. Diane also recognized that linguicism (Lippi-Green, 1997) limits opportunities for the lower classes, but she was referring to patterns of speech of lower-class Americans rather than foreign accents:

Things are determined a lot of times on how people look. Or how they articulate their words, their diction. And a lot of times people don't really -- people see the outside but they don't see the inside. . . . So getting from one class to another is really hard, I think. (Interview, April 8, 2015)

Diane's quote echoes Gramsci's argument that linguistic capital is used by the upper classes to preserve their dominance (Ives, 2004). Furthermore, both she and Amina recognized how class intersects with race, nationality, and language to compound the effects of each. This reflects a more complex and sophisticated way of critiquing oppression than thinking solely in terms of single dimensions of identity (Crenshaw, 1991).

Students did not demonstrate much ability to "imagine otherwise" (Giroux, 2011, p. 81) regarding better economic systems. Economic competition, and by extension, economic losers seemed inevitable to them. Matt said it was human nature to want competition, to which I asked if he thought it was also human nature to want equality. He answered, "I think for some people, definitely. But for some people they want to be better than--they want to push other people down to make themselves feel better. . . I would hope more people rooted for equality [than competition], but I don't know" (Matt, Interview, April 28, 2015). When I asked Roman if there was a way to improve society so people could move up the SES ladder, he answered,

Roman: It's kind of too late for change, because then there's going to be revolts from the higher classes and whatnot. So it's gonna turn out bad for America if they do. It's too late.

Interviewer: So do you think there's no way to improve this class structure that we have where we can't really move too far unless you're lucky or 'make a deal with the devil'? (borrowing from his earlier phrasing)

Roman: No because. . . It's human nature. It's just human nature. You can't change human nature without changing the humans themselves or whatnot. . . You could probably persuade one's opinion to show them the faults in it, but still it's going to happen, regardless.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Roman: It comes back. It's just like nature. Since like humans came around there's always been supremacy, territorialism, all that stuff. So it's just going to keep coming back. (Interview, April 23, 2015)

This sense of hopelessness is in contrast to the belief in progress they expressed regarding racism. There are several potential explanations. One may be that they felt personally averse to a system that might not let them compete. Angela stated, "I would like to be seen as equal but be able to like—if I wanted to do better I would have the opportunity to do better" (Interview, April 13, 2015) and Isabel said, "If you work harder than somebody else, then you should get paid more. Not the same as the other person gets paid" (Interview, April 15, 2015). The hegemony of capitalism produced a perception that the potential freerider problem (i.e. that there would be insufficient incentives to work) in classless society would be worse than the growing wealth inequality and social immobility of our current system. But lack of competition was not the only reason students were unable to imagine alternatives to capitalism. They knew of only one alternative, communism, and their misconceptions of it rendered it undesirable or impossible in their minds.

**No alternatives to market capitalism**. Students named the problem of social mobility, but did not extend this to conscientization of capitalism because the latter appeared to them to be

the only viable economic system. Their recent study of communism left them with the impressions that "it doesn't work, but it's a good thought" (Matt, Interview, April 28), it necessitates a government that is "nosy" and "interferes in people's personal lives" (Isabel, Interview, April 15), "it doesn't give you a chance to be yourself" (Roman, Interview, April 23), and it means the government dictates your religion (Angela, Interview, April 13). Here they seem to conflate what they had learned during their lessons about life under communist Soviet Union and North Korea with the theory of communism as an economic system. Ms. Bowling explained Soviet communism (and the reasons Americans opposed it) in this way:

> The US is a capitalist country. So today in America you can go to the store, you can buy whatever you want, you can get your job wherever you want, the government doesn't tell you what you can and cannot do. The Soviet Union is a communist country—the government dictates what its citizens do. The United States doesn't like communism because we feel like these people don't have equal rights. (Class observation, April 10, 2015)

She went on to describe how, in her travels from the former West to East Germany, the latter had only "old, gross buildings that looked like they had never been repaired from WWII" (Class observation, April 10, 2015). The lasting impressions students had of communism persisted despite their teachers' attempts to clarify misunderstandings. Ms. Bowling answered Angela's question about the difference between communism and a dictator thusly:

> Communism is an economic and government system. So in communism, they're controlling the economy, but the idea behind communism is eventually you won't need a government because everyone will be equal. And a dictator wants to keep someone in power. (Class observation, March 26, 2015)

Similarly, Ms. Ray's explanation of communism presented it as an economic system that sounds theoretically preferable to capitalism since in capitalism, not everyone truly can advance:

> Ms. Ray: In communism the goal is for everybody to be equal. And everybody works and everybody gets what they need. Nobody's really rich, but in theory nobody's really poor. That's the goal of communism. Why do people in America get scared of that?

William: They want to keep their wealth.

Ms. Ray: Right they want to become wealthy. The whole idea of the American dream is you start from the bottom and you get above everybody else by working hard. Right, whether or not that happens for most people, that's the idea. Right? So the United States is scared of communism because it challenges the idea of becoming wealthy and individualism and that kind of stuff. (Class observation, March 20, 2015)

Since both teachers did present communism as an economic system promoting greater equality than that afforded by capitalism, the breakdown in students' understanding then, seemed to come with the study of communism in the context of history, rather than in the context of comparative economics or philosophy. In history class, communism gets equated with Soviet totalitarianism, widespread restriction of freedoms, and even atheism. Ms. Ray taught that, in response to Lenin's anti-religious campaign in the Soviet Union, the phrases "in God we trust" and "under God" were added to American currency and the pledge of allegiance, respectively. Ms. Ray explained to the class, "communism gets tied to this idea of being ungodly or not religious. So part of this idea of who's a real American gets tied up in this idea of Christianity in the 1950s, and it never really gets untied" (Class observation, March 26, 2015). Particularly since the majority of Ms. Ray's students were Christian, their association of communism with atheism may have further impeded students' capacity for recognizing there are viable alternatives to market capitalism.

Only one student indicated an awareness that there may be additional alternatives beyond capitalism and communism. Feisty asked me during our interview if there was "some sort of middle ground," to which I responded with a brief explanation of socialism as it exists in Western Europe. Perhaps students who will take an economics course in the future will expand their awareness of alternative systems and thus their abilities to critique the ways in which capitalism actually limits, rather than enhances, social mobility (Picketty, 2014). In the meantime,

it appears that even critical approaches to U.S. History instruction are limited in their abilities to promote conscientization in this area. Some constraining factors, based on this data, are students' beliefs in meritocracy and personal aspirations to become rich, their opinion that social immobility is linked to the welfare system's incentives not to work, and finally their inability to imagine any viable alternatives to our current capitalist system due to the nature of the US history curriculum's teaching of communism vis-à-vis the Cold War.

**American Exceptionalism and the Effects of Conscientization on Patriotism**

How do students' budding critiques of racism, nativism, and the myth of the American dream affect their views of the US? Does their critical consciousness translate to any kind of postcolonial orientation toward the dominance of the West, and of the US in particular? Do they feel patriotic, disapproving, disillusioned, or something else? For starters, despite being in the second of a two-course series on American history, many students and even one of the teachers had not given the question of their own patriotism much thought. When I directly asked how they defined patriotism and whether they considered themselves patriotic, there were a range of interpretations of both questions. Several students were not sure how to define patriotism and thus how to identify themselves. Once we discussed the definition, about a third said yes (Amina, Matt, Alex, Isabel), a third said no (Kiya, Roman, Angela, and Courtney), and a third said "slightly" or "somewhat" (Melony, Diane, Josephine).

Only one student (Ida) said yes to the question of whether they thought the US was the greatest country in the world. Several (Melony, Alex, Roman) said there were probably better places, citing European countries as examples, but noted that they had not been there and that they were still happy to live in the US especially because their family lived here. In analyzing her students' interview transcripts, Ms. Ray wondered if they were conflating patriotism with

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contentment to live in the US, the latter being essentially predetermined by it being the only

place they knew. Angela's response supports this interpretation: "If I were to get kicked out of

the country I would be kinda upset. Because I kinda somewhat like it here" (Interview, April 13,

2015). Angela also based her opinion on comparisons between the US and other countries:

> I mean it's a lot better—present day it's a lot better than any other places, I mean we still have our issues that we need to work out. But overall I'm fine living in the US. Because I would not—I would really hate to live in some developing or Third World country where women cannot speak. I like speaking, I like having rights. And I don't want to get abused. Like for example in Cambodia, for like domestic violence, as long as the man doesn't draw blood, you're good. You won't get charged for it. (Interview, April 13, 2015)

The effects of such justification via comparison will be explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

Some students did not even think the question made sense to ask. Feisty answered, "No. I

wouldn't say I'm patriotic. It doesn't even make any sense, saying you love your country. Like

it's just a landmass with a border. How can that be something you love?" She also said, "I mean

I don't think you should really be proud of where you were born. Because you don't have any

choice over that" (Interview, April 22, 2015). Feisty saw patriotism as having pride in something

you cannot take credit for, and loving a feature of political geography. It is important to note that

her lack of patriotic identification did not arise out of frustration with the United States, but

rather out of a dismissal of the whole idea of patriotism, in any context, as nonsensical. She did

not see the nation-state as a construct worthy of great love. Her analysis echoed the argument in

renowned political theorist George Kateb's (2000) essay "Is Patriotism a Mistake?" In it he

contended that, while a country is a place and setting with physical features,

> It is also constructed out of transmitted memories true and false; a history usually mostly falsely sanitized or falsely heroized; a sense of kinship of a largely invented purity; and social ties that are largely invisible or impersonal, indeed abstract, yet by an act of insistent or of dream-like imagination made visible and personal. (p. 907)

Feisty, too, saw the sense of kinship that one associates with patriotism as an invented

abstraction.

Kateb (2000) went on to argue that patriotism is an abstraction that is not the same sort as a moral principle such as liberty, only the latter of which it may be necessary to die or kill for. Josephine made a similar distinction when she argued there is a difference between "loving your country" and "being willing to sacrifice your life for it." She said that although she loved the US,

> I think the country itself doesn't really protect its people enough for me to want to go out and put myself in a predicament . . . If police brutality and other things like—you're not ensuring my safety here, so what would make you think I would feel safe outside of here? (Interview, April 6, 2015)

Although the class did not study Muhammad Ali's conscientious objection to the Vietnam draft, Josephine's quote was reminiscent of his protest: "the real enemy of my people is here . . . If I thought the war was going to bring freedom and equality to 22 million of my people they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow" (as cited in Allen, 2008, p. 94). Like Ali, Josephine suggested that patriotism is not deserved by a nation that continues to oppress large segments of its population.

Other students' beliefs that critique could reflect patriotism aligned more with Michael Apple (2004), who attested that "rigorous criticism of a nation's policies demonstrates a commitment to the nation itself" (p. 168). Along these lines, political and social theorists have proposed a distinction between authoritarian and democratic patriotism. The first consists of unquestioning allegiance to one's country and the belief that one's country is superior to all others, whereas the second allows for dissent and directs allegiance to democratic principles rather than to the nation itself (Westheimer, 2011). The students in these classes were clearly displaying the second; however not all agreed that the second qualifies as patriotism. I tend to agree with the students in the latter camp and disagree with proponents of democratic patriotism who contend that allegiance to democracy is itself a type of patriotism. Given that the sole book-

length philosophical study of the concept defines patriotism as special concern and affection for one's own country (Nathanson, 1993), advocacy merely of democratic principles could not be classified as patriotism according to this definition. It is easy to understand how students had trouble defining the term or characterizing themselves, given that political and social theorists continue to debate its meaning. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will not delve into further analysis of the complex and sometimes contradictory attitudes students expressed toward the US and the idea of patriotism itself, but I plan to do so in my future research.

In terms of answering the research questions of this study, some conscientization was evident in that students were beginning to interrogate the idea of American exceptionalism and the common sense notion that patriotism is a quality that all Americans should possess. Some students explicitly traced their critique to their US history class. Roman, for instance, in explaining how he concluded that the US is "cocky for a young nation," said that Ms. Bowling taught that the US has only been attacked on its own soil twice which gives Americans the "the sense of "oh no one's gonna touch us on our turf because like no one has the [courage]" (Interview, April 23, 2016). Ms. Bowling repeatedly reminded students that the US's superpower status is tenuous:

> You guys should realize how fragile the entire system is. So think about this. The Middle East. The basis for human civilizations. That's where Mesopotamia came out of. That's where some of our greatest civilizations have emerged. But look at it today. The US—you have to think about it, the US may not always be what it is today. And what would it be like for the people living here if that's the case? (Class observation, April 8, 2016)

Here Ms. Bowling was attempting to foster some humility, so that students would question ideologies of American superiority and exceptionalism and consider the possibility that, although the US is more powerful than other nations at the moment, this may not always be true. Students seemed to be internalizing this lesson in their preferences that the US focus more on its own

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problems than in trying to "help" foreign nations.

**Summary**

Figure 2 summarizes the analysis presented in this chapter. In the center are the various social structures students were becoming critically conscious of, starting with the area of greatest conscientization (racism) at the top. On the left are the elements of these U.S. History classes that seemed to support conscientization. On the right are the sources of contradictory consciousness for each social structure.
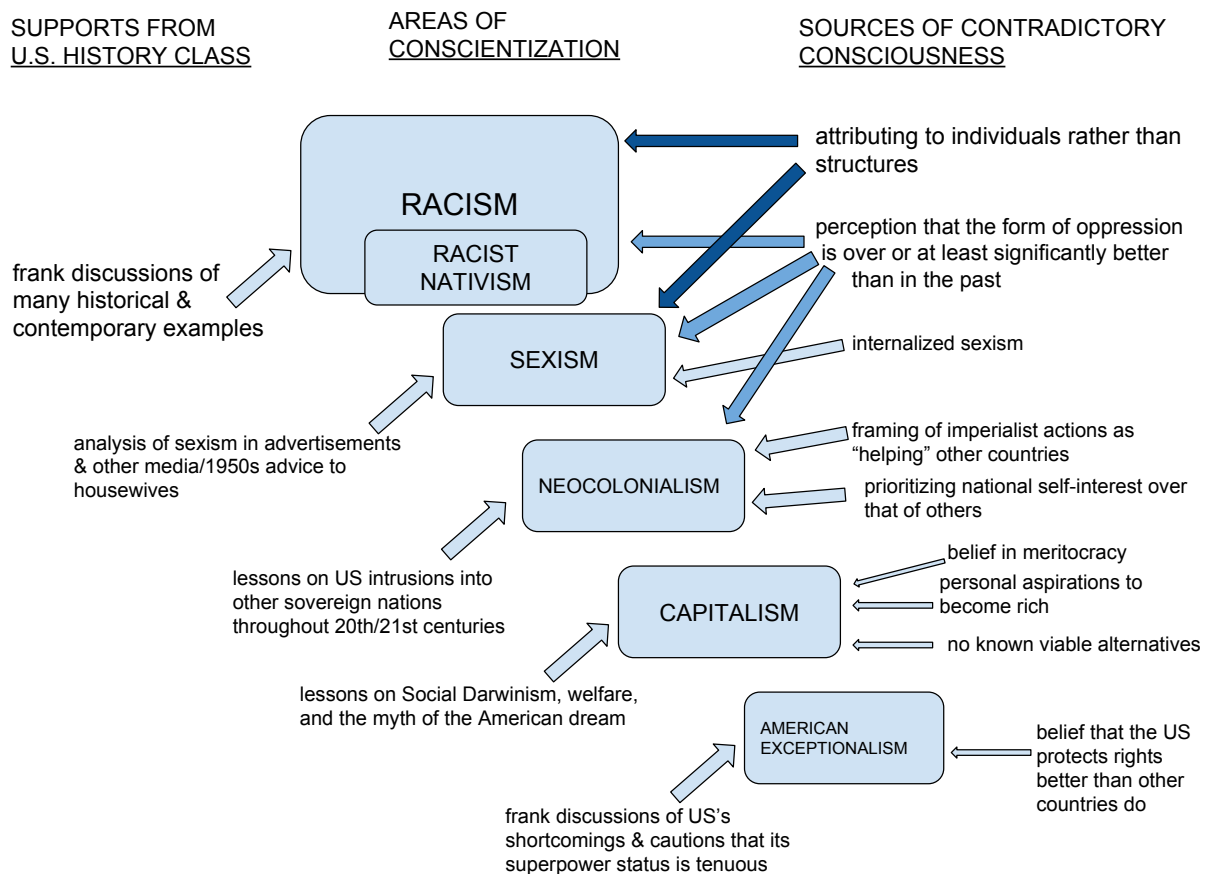


*Figure 2.* Areas of Conscientization, Supports, and Sources of Contradictory Consciousness

The factor most salient in determining which forms of contemporary oppression students could identify and which were associated with contradictory consciousness was not, as one might

expect, those forms that had most disadvantaged them personally (i.e. sexism, neoliberal capitalism, and in many cases racism), but rather those which were most discussed in public discourse and in their classrooms (i.e. racism, racist nativism, and heteronormativity). Discrimination against Black Americans, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community were commonly covered in the media and discussed among peers and in class. Sexism and neocolonialism, on the other hand, were not as commonly addressed. I was encouraged by the observation that students did not stop at condemning only the structures that personally repress them. For instance, non-immigrant Black students were as likely to critique discrimination against immigrants as were immigrant students, and several heterosexual students condemned discrimination against same-sex couples. This is an important theme that I will elaborate upon in Chapter 7 when I argue that common ideologies played a stronger role than identity differences in shaping students' critical consciousness.

**CHAPTER 6: THRESHOLDS OF CONSCIENTIZATION ACROSS AREAS**

**Introduction**

The previous chapter contrasted students' levels of conscientization of different

oppressive structures ranging from racism (relatively higher conscientization) to sexism and

capitalism (relatively lower conscientization). Gramsci (1971) attested that we all possess some

level of contradictory consciousness, but we can lessen the contradiction through questioning our

common sense (unexamined assumptions fed by folk wisdom and ideology) through integrating

philosophical understanding and good sense (empirically-based knowledge). This is a process

that requires time and some impetus for initiating such questioning in the first place. Critical

teachers can create these opportunities, and their classrooms may be among the few places that

allow this, given that hegemonic forces such as religion (Kunzman, 2011) and the media

(Kincheloe, 2007) typically hinder this questioning.

However, one year with one teacher offers limited exposure compared to daily and

lifelong socialization into dominant ideologies such as individualism and meritocracy. In the

course of one year, it might be expected that students' consciousness can only move from more

contradictory to less contradictory, rather than to a completely reconciled critical consciousness.

For instance, students may gain evidence from their U.S. History class that supports their good

sense observations that the American dream is a myth; however, they may still cling to their

common sense belief that they personally have a strong chance at becoming wealthy. This

movement toward less contradictory consciousness, at least in my interpretation of the data,

appeared to best characterize the student comments I recorded during observations and

interviews. This led to several subquestions stemming from the second research question, "In what ways and to what extent do students appear to become more critically conscious?" These subquestions were: a) In what ways were students questioning their common sense? b) In what ways was common sense still apparent in their comments? c) What characterizes their progression (if it exists) towards less contradictory consciousness and greater critical consciousness?

Other scholars have conceived of this progression toward greater sociopolitical awareness as movement through thresholds (Gorski, Osei-Kofi, Sapp, & Zenkof, 2012). According to this view, before a student can gain a deep and critical understanding of an issue or concept, there are a series of preliminary concepts that must first be understood, or in some cases, unlearned. For example, a student may not be able to form a critique of capitalism if she does not first understand the ways in which this system precludes equal opportunities for economic advancement. Without this understanding, a bottleneck may occur. Such bottlenecks are especially to be expected when students are confronted with "troublesome knowledge" or realizations that may be difficult to accept immediately (Meyer & Land, 2005). Meyer and Land (2005) characterized threshold concepts as "transformative (occasioning a significant shift in the perception of a subject), irreversible (unlikely to be forgotten, or unlearned only through considerable effort), and integrative (exposing the previously hidden interrelatedness of something)" (p. 373).

The concept of threshold concepts and bottlenecks is a useful heuristic for understanding the students' progression towards critical consciousness as well as the persistence of common sense thinking even as they progressed. Interpreting through this lens also allows us to replace the idea of barriers, setbacks, or other forms of a *problem* of the students or teaching practices,

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with the more positive idea of narrower segments of the path toward further questioning and awareness. After all, although a bottleneck is a narrowing, it also terminates in an opening; it is not a dead end but a thinner portion of the path. Another important element of this conceptual framework is that each threshold provides a gateway to new thresholds. More importantly, once crossed, it is unlikely the learner will retreat back to initial ways of knowing (Meyers & Land, 2005).

I have grouped the threshold concepts and skills that students acquired into three categories according to the critical pedagogy focus that seemed to contribute most to each. The three focuses or aims of critical pedagogy that best summarized these thresholds are: (a) perspective-taking, complexity, and empathy, (b) confronting contemporary injustices, and (c) political action. In each case, both teachers sought to develop their students' critical understandings related to these concepts, and in each case students demonstrated some movement away from common sense thinking. However, there were also bottlenecks for each category. In other words, ideologies and common sense presented some narrowing along the path toward critical consciousness. Examples of both thresholds and bottlenecks are described for each category below. Figure 3 summarizes these thresholds and bottlenecks.
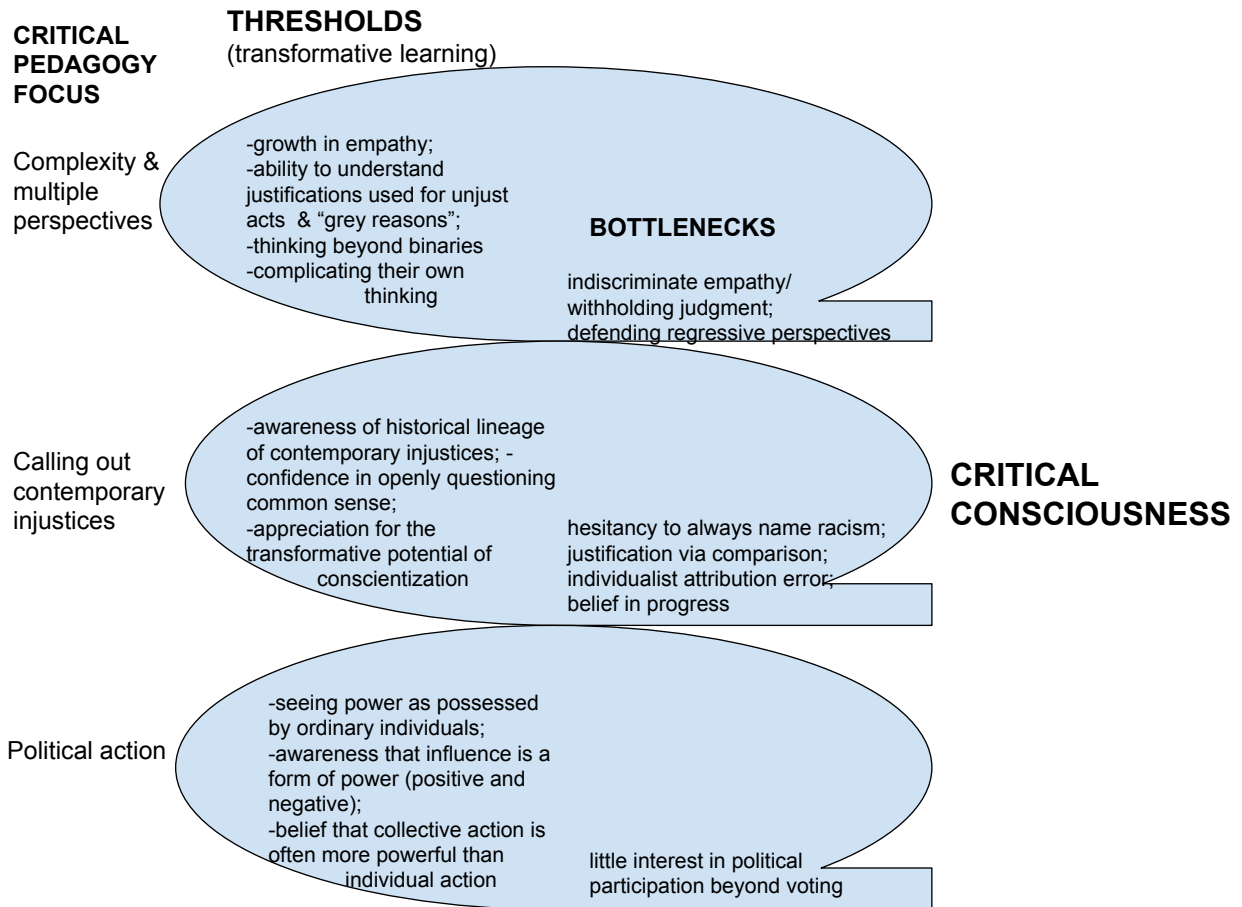
*Figure 3.* Thresholds of Conscientization Across Areas and Bottlenecks

**Perspective-Taking, Complexity, and Empathy**

**Teacher goals.** Both teachers knew that for a complex and critical understanding of history, as well as society, their students would need to understand the multiple perspectives on any given social issue. For instance, it might be hard for students to imagine how the U.S. government could justify forcefully removing Native Americans from their land, so the teachers had to explain manifest destiny and how this belief justified such reprehensible acts. If students receive only the story of the atrocity, without the rationale used to justify it, they may condemn it but will not have the knowledge base necessary for a thoughtful critique. In addition, without gaining knowledge of the worldviews that undergird oppressive acts, it will be difficult for

students to conceive and enact effective counter-oppressive action. Thus critical pedagogy requires promoting an understanding of the complex and multiple standpoints on any social issue, historical or contemporary.

The teachers also felt that recognizing complexity and multiple perspectives were skills students would need for the rest of their lives in addition to needing them for understanding history (Kincheloe, 2008). Ms. Ray said, "If you're not coming away with an understanding of the complexity, then you probably weren't thinking critically enough. I want them to have those critical thinking skills, for their own benefit in their future lives" (Interview, March 28, 2015). Ms. Bowling echoed this sentiment and added that acquisition of these skills was likelier to stick better than knowledge of historical facts:

> Most of what you're teaching them as far as content goes, they're not going to remember it. Unfortunately. But what they will remember, hopefully, is thinking critically, evaluating things from different sides, trying to analyze if there's different points of view. (Interview, April 3, 2015)

Such a skill is also needed for a critical reading of the world. The hegemony of dominant ideologies is typically successful at garnering consent—even without subordinated groups being aware they are giving it (Gramsci, 1971). The dominant ideology can be so unquestioned that people do not even recognize that counter-ideologies exist, especially if they have not been educated to look for them. Thus an aim of critical pedagogy is to ensure students know there are *always* alternative perspectives, and to ensure that they search for them. Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling were working toward this by stressing that every historical example studied was viewed from multiple perspectives at the time, and often is often still viewed from multiple perspectives in the present.

Through exploring multiple perspectives, the teachers also felt another of their goals would be supported: the goal to build empathy in their students. Ms. Ray felt this was a

component of critical pedagogy. When I asked her in what ways she worked to build critical consciousness, she answered that she asks students to do quick-writes that put them in the shoes of someone in the past, such as an enslaved person or a Chinese immigrant, and then ask them to make particular decisions such as whether to run away after the Emancipation Proclamation or, in the second case, choose a job on the railroads or in San Francisco. She explained how she connected such exercises to building critical consciousness: "I think doing that exercise, you have to think about the limits that have been on people in the past and on different groups: limitations of geography and resources and social opportunity" (Interview, March 28, 2015). Ms. Bowling similarly asked students to imagine themselves in the shoes of people who have struggled both in the past and in the present. For instance, in the lesson on the Baltimore riots, Ms. Bowling explained that 34% of homes in Freddie Gray's neighborhood were vacant and asked students to imagine if one out of three homes in their own neighborhoods were boarded up.

**Approaches used by teachers and thresholds crossed by students.** In many instances, the teachers presented the less-known perspective on a historical event. This helped students question the common sense understandings they had unconsciously inherited. For instance, both teachers emphasized the Japanese perspective on America's dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Ms. Bowling showed an anime video, created in Japan, that depicted people melting just after the explosion, and then a boy and his pregnant mom trying and failing to save the rest of their family from a burning pile of rubble. She explained, "I wanted to give you this other perspective so you could see for Japan how bad this was for them" (Class observation, April 9, 2015). Student responses in class included comments like "That's sad" (Kiya) and, "I feel bad because they looked so happy in the video and then they died" (Brice). It was clear in the debate that followed over whether the U.S. should have dropped atomic bombs

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on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that many students felt empathy and affinity for the Japanese victims, despite having recently learned of the Japanese attack on American citizens at Pearl Harbor in 1941.

When I asked students in interviews whether they thought the U.S. government usually makes good decisions, two of Ms. Ray's students cited use of the atomic bomb as a bad decision (Melony and Amina). Amina's explanation for her opinion, however, included an understanding of the rationale for dropping the bomb. She said that she understood that the president's job is to protect American lives, but that the soldiers who enlisted were prepared to die for their country whereas most of the Japanese victims were civilians. She added that one life should not be valued over another and concluded, "Once you kill someone in an instant and burn their lungs and stuff like that, it's cruel. And I don't think it's the right decision ever" (Interview, April 1, 2015). Amina and others were able to critique, rather than merely condemn, this political decision because they had an understanding of the justifications used by both sides.

Both teachers also had students reflect on the why it was important that they consider multiple perspectives, a metacognitive activity that the teachers hoped students would apply in the future. Ms. Bowling told her class:

> I want to push you guys to realize, is that for everything that you're told there are two sides to every story—well people say there are 3 sides right. There's your side, there's the other person's side and somewhere in the middle there's the truth. (Class observation, April 9, 2015)

From interviews it was clear that students did indeed have metacognitive awareness that they were learning multiple perspectives. For instance, Josephine said:

> I really give her [Ms. Ray] a thumps up on how she presents all perspectives because most teachers will just give you one perspective to look at. But she gives you the—maybe in war the civilians' perspective, the Koreans' perspective, the US's perspective. She gives us everybody's perspective. And I think that's very important because you can't really judge or say he or she or this group of people is wrong for this that and the third, without

knowing how they feel. (Interview, April 6, 2015)

Whereas Josephine saw perspective recognition as vital for empathy and legitimacy in critiquing a decision, Kiya also saw it as vital for cognitive understanding of an event or issue: "You gotta learn from different people. . . who were in a situation. The people who were being the oppressors and the people who were oppressed. And you have to see all sides in order to understand it" (Interview, April 9, 2015).

However, it also became clear through interviews that just because students may become aware that multiple perspectives exist, this does not mean they necessarily knew what those perspectives are. For instance, Matt explained that, prior to Ms. Bowling's class, he was aware of multiple interpretations of history but his teachers did not provide opportunities to learn what those interpretations were: "With the example of slavery, I know that there's slaves, I know that they have their own examples of point of views. I was just never taught what it was" (Interview, April 28, 2015). Students might organically know *of* multiple perspectives or have an abstract awareness that they exist, but without knowledge *from* these perspectives, they lack access to a counter-worldview that would facilitate questioning of their own common sense. Thus this aspect of these teachers' practice helped move students towards more critical consciousness.

***Complicating ideas of progress and binary thinking***. Once students crossed this threshold to awareness of multiple perspectives, they could then move toward an understanding that this means there are always multiple interpretations of historical events and trends. What one person may view as progress, another may see as a setback. This complicated the common sense notion that history is characterized by progress. Ms. Ray told students, "As y'all know by now, you've been in this class long enough, there are very few sort of perfect steps forward in this history" (Class observation, March 17, 2015). For instance, when teaching the impact of World

War II on Black Americans, Ms. Ray explained that for every step forward there was a "but." For instance, even though there were more jobs available to Black Americans, they were still paid less and discriminated against.

When I asked students in their interviews, "Is there one history that we all should learn? Or are there multiple histories?" every respondent replied there are multiple. As discussed in the prior section, awareness of this multiplicity is necessary for recognizing the complexity of social conditions. Ms. Ray told her students, "Because this is not math class, there is not just one answer. . . I'm going to tell you both sides. There's truth to both. All these things I'm gonna tell you are true" (Class observation, March 4, 2015). Amina captured this idea well:

> I think sometimes we always look like maybe American History as black and white. Or even like, Black and White people, or this was good or bad. Just black and white period. And I think there's a lot of in-betweens that happen in American history, and that are still happening. And I think --- I guess it just depends on your view, how you would view this thing as good or bad. But I think nothing is really good or bad. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

Angela, from Ms. Bowling's class, expressed a similar growth in appreciating complexity:

> At first, I was like OK some of the things the government do is just like totally corrupt, very wrong. But now learning about the passage of history, I'm more like ambiguous. I'm like OK, there's more of a grey reason. It's more of an understanding of why that they did some of the things they did. (Interview, April 13, 2015)

Both young women recognized that binary thinking (e.g. good vs. bad) is simplistic and therefore limits one's understanding of social phenomena. Other students asked questions in class that indicated they were trying to complicate their own understanding of an issue. The following excerpt from Ms. Ray's lesson on the 1950s illustrates this:

> Ida: I have a question. What about the mixed people? I was looking at somebody and thinking about how would they fit into this system in the 50s.

> Ms. Ray: Well it depends on whether or not you can or choose to pass for white. If you can pass for white and that's what you choose to do—

> Ida: You better do it.

Ms. Ray: If you cannot pass for white or do not want to pass for white--A lot of people could and didn't want to—then you would be considered Black and that comes with a lot of disadvantages

Ida: What about Blackinese and stuff? (Class observation, March 26, 2015)

In this example Ida picked up on the fact that the conversation had been mostly about Black and White people, and she wanted to know about multiracial people. When she assumed that everyone who could would pass as White, Ms. Ray corrected her that not everyone wanted to pass. Ida's second question, about "Blackinese" suggested that perhaps she viewed Ms. Ray's answer to pertain only to biracial people of Black and White heritage, whereas she was also interested in people with Black and Asian heritage, for example. In this way she moved beyond the Black/White binary as well as Black/White/biracial-Black-and-White tertiary to inquire about racial experiences that would fall outside both of these.

Appreciating "grey reasons" (Angela, Interview, April 13, 2015) and thinking outside of binaries are important thresholds toward critical consciousness. Students can then begin to understand difficult concepts required for understanding hegemony, such as the notion that a subordinated person could in some ways consent to his or her own subordination. This would perhaps be more difficult for students to comprehend than the idea that people are duped by the dominant bloc, as the concept of *false consciousness* would suggest. Rather, the subordinated are at least partially aware of how they are being subordinated, but through cultural practices continue to unintentionally consent to these hegemonic processes. These ideas had not been introduced to the students; however, if they are exposed to them later such as perhaps in college, some thresholds necessary for grappling with such difficult ideas had at least been crossed. In addition, the students are unlikely to revert back to simplistic or binary thinking now that these thresholds have been traversed (Meyer & Land, 2005).

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**Bottlenecks.** One major theme from the data is that the balance between an empathetic understanding of multiple perspectives and an ability to simultaneously name injustices can be a tough one to strike. The students did cross thresholds toward greater empathy and perspective recognition; however, some bottlenecks emerged when students over-applied this skill in empathizing with the perspectives of oppressors. Below I discuss two such bottlenecks and then connect these back to the teachers' intentions not to impose moral values or incite anger in students.

*Indiscriminate empathy.* One avenue through which students inadvertently supported regressive hegemonic thinking was through empathizing with perspectives that deserve no tolerance. For instance, some students thought they needed to understand even bigoted perspectives. Amina explained,

> Being in her American History class, it makes me see both sides. Like it makes you see-- like when we were talking about the racism, it makes you see the white supremacist's side and it makes you see the Black person's side. So I guess it gives you better perspective about history. (Interview, April 6, 2015)

When Ms. Ray read this transcript, she exclaimed in a surprised and troubled tone, "I didn't teach them to see the white supremacists' side!" Indeed none of the lessons I observed included any sort of defense of white supremacy. Rather Ms. Ray wanted students to contextualize events and understand that mindsets in the Jim Crow era were different than they are now. She wanted them to understand mindsets of this era to gain a better understanding of history, not necessarily to be able to empathize with bigoted perspectives. However when empathy is so often and heavily promoted in the class, it may be unsurprising that students would over-apply this skill and try to empathize with every historical actor, potentially diminishing their outrage over historical injustices.

Amina went on to explain, "Well I think it's easy for us to see, or for us to be mad at

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segregation, stuff like that. But we have to look at where it came from" (Interview, April 1, 2015). Although she was demonstrating an ability to contextualize in order to think historically (Barton, 2010) she also set up a false binary in which anger and understanding are opposed. She suggested we would not be "mad at segregation" once we understand "where it came from," when in fact it is possible to both understand where it came from and still feel angry. In fact, I would argue that it is perhaps necessary to be mad at segregation if we are to see today's racism as a cause urgent enough to warrant our action. The consequences of a lack of such anger are explored more in the third section of this chapter, "Political Action." Perhaps teachers should emphasize that understanding why a person in history might behave a certain way does not mean the action is justifiable or that one cannot still be angry about it.

    ***Defending regressive perspectives.*** Another bottleneck was that students may not just understand indefensible perspectives such as white supremacists', but may even defend such perspectives in class discussions or assignments. For instance, when discussing the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, some of Ms. Bowling's students defended the policy. Jerry said of the government, "They were just being safe." Several said it was ok because at least the Japanese were not killed, unlike the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. However, one student, Steven, countered, "Saying it's not bad because we didn't kill them--That's like saying a kidnapper isn't bad because he didn't kill the person he kidnapped" (Class observation, April 8, 2015). Jerry responded, "Were they starving?" and several students asked if the interned received free food and housing. Ms. Bowling attempted to build their empathy for the oppressed in this case, rather than the oppressors they were currently defending by saying,

> Imagine if I told you this. Jerry, somewhere in your ancestor's history—you may have been born here, your parents may have been born here, but I'm the US government and I've traced your lineage. And I found out that somewhere down the line, your family came from Japan. And that's too risky so I'm going to take you and you're going to live

in this camp until I tell you that you can leave. (Class observation, April 8, 2015) Somehow this only seemed to feed two of the students' (Brice and Kevin's, both White males) desires to defend the policy. Kevin said, "We didn't put them in railroad cars and we didn't put them in fires and put them in gas chambers. . . They just put a barbed wire fence around them," and Brice added, "We gave them food, shelter. They should feel lucky." After class, Ms. Bowling told me she was frustrated that these students lacked empathy for the people interned. I asked her if she thought they were just trying to get a rise out of her or the class, and she replied she thought this was likely the case for Brice but not for Kevin. It is difficult to say whether these students truly believed Executive Order 9066 was justified or if they were enjoying the attention their comments prompted. Another possible contributing factor was Ms. Bowling's frequent encouragement of dissent. Perhaps these students had internalized the lesson that dissent is always valued, even if the position argued is an oppressive one. Teachers may need to ensure students understand that some forms of dissent can be oppressive, and that the oppressed can sometimes unwittingly act as sub-oppressors (Freire, 1970).

**Teachers' analysis of the balance between teaching values and teaching critique.** In allowing students to construct their own knowledge and options, the teachers tried to refrain from suggesting to students how they should feel or think, an effort which was sometimes at odds with their goals of enhancing their skills in social critique. Both mentioned not wanting to teach morals or oppose the moral education students were learning from their families and communities, which in many students' cases included their churches. Ms. Ray said explicitly, "I don't feel like it's my place to shape their personal values" (Interview, March 28, 2015). She added, "especially when you're talking about students' opinions and beliefs, I'm really not trying to say your religion is wrong. I'm really not trying to say that your parents are wrong or your

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grandparents are wrong." She sought a compromise between teaching critical sociopolitical consciousness and respecting the values students had already formed. The compromise consisted of complicating students' common sense in the hopes that this would promote critical consciousness. Although such a strategy *may* expose students to their own contradictory consciousness, it also leaves open the possibility that this will never occur.

Ms. Ray had also come to the conclusion that hoping for outrage or sorrow from students was problematic. She explained that in her first year she did try to assess "whether they [students] got it or not" through their emotional reactions to a lesson. But she soon realized, "Kids know when the teacher's trying to make them feel bad about something. Right? And they're not going to want to feel bad. Unless they *do* feel bad, and then they're just going to feel bad! Nobody wins!" (Interview, September 19, 2015). As a result, she sought the line between teaching empathy and expecting students to express particular emotions. This left open the possibility that students may not feel outraged or indignant enough to view bigoted perspectives as unworthy of tolerance. Of course this possibility might also exist regardless of the teacher's desire to provoke particular emotional outcomes. In any case, in an environment in which teachers' critical values are not explicitly advocated and students' prior values are not scrutinized, there may be more frequent or significant bottlenecks on the path toward questioning common sense to expose contradictory consciousness. In sum, the critical pedagogy approaches both teachers used opened thresholds for students' understanding of the complexity of social issues; however some students also over-extended empathy or took up viewpoints in ways that actually defended anti-critical (or regressive hegemonic) positions. Future research might explore the question of whether this can/should be avoided or is a necessary phase within conscientization.

**Confronting Contemporary Injustices**

Even though these were history classes, conversations frequently drifted to contemporary political, social, and economic conditions. More specifically, these discussions illuminated current problems so that students could both see the historical origins of these problems and potential ways to redress them. This is in line with critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy, which aim to develop sociopolitical consciousness in students (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). From my interviews with students, it was clear that they could identify several contemporary injustices such as racial profiling, wealth inequality, and xenophobic and neocolonial immigration policies. In addition, students believed it was important to learn about these issues in school and that teachers should not shy away from acknowledging flaws of American society, even if this risked weakening students' patriotism. However, in terms of acting on this sociopolitical awareness, students expressed very little plans to personally confront injustices through political involvement beyond voting. Some potential contributors to this relative disinterest are explored in this section.

**Teacher goals and concerns.** In describing their goals as teachers, both Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling went far beyond instilling greater knowledge of history. They talked about equipping students with a wider set of skills that would help them be successful in society, including critical thinking about the historical grounding of *contemporary* conditions and understanding "how different systems work" and how to "question and critique" (Ms. Ray, Interview, March 28, 2015). Ms. Bowling in particular was more interested in students understanding how they fit into history than knowing the details of historical events. She had a more constructivist, rather than perennialist or essentialist orientation toward history teaching (Gaudelli, 2002). This could partially be traced back to her undergraduate training in economics, whereas Ms. Ray majored in

history. Recall from Ms. Bowling's earlier quote on what types of learning students actually retain, she believed, "most of what you're teaching them as far as content goes, they're not going to remember it" (Interview, April 3, 2015). Thus she directed more energy to teaching how historical events impact them today: "So really making it more active. That they play a role this somehow, like history is not ancient. You do a certain thing today because of something that happened however long ago" (Interview, April 3, 2015). As a result, both teachers often allowed or even instigated digressions from the historical topic at hand to discuss contemporary connections with that particular event or period (e.g., activity on which Black Panthers' Ten Points are still needed today).

One strategy Ms. Ray used to get students in the habit of identifying injustices was to model doing so herself, through calling out racism in history and in the present. This practice is similar to what Michelle Fine (2003) termed *naming*, or "those practices that facilitate critical conversation about social and economic arrangements, particularly about inequitable distributions of power and resources by which these students and their kin suffer disproportionately" (p. 18-19). Because her class population was more racially heterogeneous, Ms. Bowling felt that it would be more powerful for the students to be the ones to name racism, rather than the teacher. She feared that her naming racism might be less convincing than peers doing so. This is in line with her use of dialogue in the class as a means to let students challenge each other's opinions, rather than the teacher doing so, with the associated risk that the confronted person will dismiss her view more readily than they would dismiss a peer's.

While both teachers valued discussions of current injustices, they were also concerned that students might conclude that contemporary injustices are so entrenched that nothing can be done about them. The severity of this concern and the methods used to counteract it varied

between the two teachers. Ms. Bowling only discussed the concern when I directly asked her if she worried students might become disillusioned, whereas Ms. Ray brought it up herself several times throughout both interviews. In her response to my question, Ms. Bowling listed several students that she believed sometimes showed signs of disillusionment (i.e. Angela, Isabel, Kiya, and Lexa); however, she immediately followed that statement with an explanation of how she attempts to prevent this through showing students how "they can be powerful" (Interview, April 3, 2015). She elaborated that her goals were:

> . . . trying to take that disillusionment and getting it to go into action. Not for us to just be like, "Alright I don't understand what America is doing so I'm not going to participate." But rather taking it and saying, "Ok you have the power to change this, so do it." (Interview, April 3, 2015).

The second sentence of her quote insinuates that Ms. Bowling believes that students would be more likely to participate once they understood "what America is doing." In other words, sociopolitical awareness in and of itself would spur students to act, in her view. Data from student interviews, however, did not substantiate this view. Critics of critical pedagogy have also questioned this expectation (Au, 2011).

By contrast, Ms. Ray brought up the disillusionment concern before I asked about it. In response to my question, "Do you think there are any risks to encouraging students to question?" Ms. Ray answered,

> Yes. I mean there's a risk of asking students to be critical, and it's cynicism. I worry all the time that my students are gonna reach this saturation point for learning about past atrocities or injustice, where they're just going to believe that things have always been bad and will always be bad. And there's nothing they can do. And basically by oversaturating them with examples, take away their agency and feeling of hope about the possibility for things to be better. I think a lot about whether the critical way that I teach history makes students preconditioned to want to disengage or feel disconnected from the government. . . Am I teaching about this in a way that's just going to make kids feel hopeless? Because I'm emphasizing too much the brutality? (Interview, March 28, 2015).

There are several possible reasons Ms. Ray worried more about disengagement than Ms.

Bowling did. First, Ms. Ray's early experiences in a high school multicultural studies elective made a lasting impact on her views of teaching and the purposes of social studies. Her teacher had dedicated the entire semester to just two topics: the Holocaust and the Triangle Trade, specifically the Middle Passage. Worse, in Ms. Ray's view, she exclusively showed videos that would drive home the atrocities of each event, with the apparent goal of provoking an emotional reaction in the students. She explained that this approach to teaching left students with the impression that "there's no hope there. It's just despair. Just terror" (Interview, September 19, 2015). Although Ms. Ray did not say so explicitly, these early experiences with teaching for despair may have shaped her current intentions to avoid such practices.

Evidently more influential in this regard was Ms. Ray's perception that many of her students believed social conditions had not improved throughout history. She reported that students often made comments like, "It's just like now what was happening back then!" and that she had to remind them that, although they were correct that brutality still occurs now, it is different in that now brutality is widely condemned and perpetrators are more likely to be indicted. She added that the racial makeup of her class also led her to be more apprehensive of disillusionment, whereas if she taught mostly White students she would worry they would "view history as, 'And then everything was fixed because I don't really see these things in my daily life.'" She added, "But because I'm teaching Students of Color, they know. There's no doubt in their minds that everything's not bright and sunny" (Interview, September 19, 2015).

Thus she seemed to believe that awareness of contemporary injustices is something most of her students would have gained through their own lived experiences, and as a result her job was not to harp on these but rather temper cynicism and frustration with historical examples of organized resistance. In fact, she also worried that their lived experiences made discussions of

oppression in class too painful for some of them. We saw this in Ms. Ray's reflections on students' reactions to the decision not to indict Darren Wilson discussed in Chapter 5. She said she did not necessarily want all students to become politicized because for some of them, "it just causes them grief to be that aware" (Interview, March 28, 2015). However, without this awareness, conscientization is stalled and the desire to transform society is likely compromised. Perhaps the grief can be mediated through involving students in political movements that give them a sense of purpose and solidarity with others.

**Thresholds crossed.** As described in Chapter 5, many students did become conscientized to contemporary injustices such as racially-related police misconduct and prejudiced policies towards immigrant families and same-sex couples. They also began to link these to historical patterns and trends. For example, during Ms. Ray's lesson on the Native American takeovers of Alcatraz and the town of Wounded Knee, one Black female student (Kiara) asked, "Do White people ever get mistreated in history?" Another Black female student (Dakota) answered, "The women do." Ms. Ray replied, "Yeah, the women do. The poor do. Jewish people do." Kiara clarified, "I'm talking about everybody" to which Ms. Ray answered, "Systematically? Not really. Not in the same institutional way. Unless you're a woman, which is 51% of the White population. . . . straight White wealthy men? Not really" (Class observation, April 16, 2015). Kiara's question and Dakota's response suggest they are beginning to recognize the historical lineage of contemporary social inequities, a central aim of critical pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2008). A few students also believed current injustices were problematic enough to warrant organized resistance. Dolores, for instance, thought police misconduct should be addressed through direct action such as protest.

On a metacognitive level, students' statements revealed that they were aware of their

growing skills at social critique, and they were grateful to their teachers for helping to facilitate this. Kiara's letter to Ms. Ray, described in Chapter 5, illustrates this. I asked students if they thought it was ok for U.S. history teachers to express critical views regarding the US, all of them said yes, and many added that this was necessary for good teaching. Roman explained, "The teacher shouldn't be compelled to like make the US seem awesome and whatnot. It's just supposed to show realistic and real-life facts so people won't be so susceptible to the lying or deceptiveness" (Interview, April 23, 2015). Isabel's opinion was similar: "Actually if you have somebody that's not as proud to be American, they'll teach you more than what a teacher that's proud to be an American would. Like they won't teach you the corrupt stuff. Like Ms. Bowling did" (Interview, April 15, 2015).

Both Kiara and Isabel used the metaphor of vision: Kiara wrote that Ms. Ray "opened her eyes" and Isabel said by learning both the positive and negative, she felt that now she could "see." It was as if their prior schooling, which several students mentioned focused only on positive aspects of history, served to mystify them further from awareness of oppressive social conditions. I use "further" since socialization prior to and outside of schools mystifies as well (Gramsci, 1971). This has been called the *hidden curriculum*, a term used to describe the elements of schools that legitimate and perpetuate the dominant culture and social hierarchies (Darder, 2012). The students here recognized that much of their prior education was "fairy tale stuff" (Angela, Interview, April 15, 2015)—in other words mystifying and intended to obscure reality. The critical pedagogy they were now encountering was thus making visible both the hidden curriculum and the realities kept concealed in order to maintain hegemonic consent.

The fact that their teachers were willing to speak candidly about the negative aspects of the US gave students license to speak candidly about their experiences with American society.

For instance, Angela answered my very first interview question, which was "In general how would you describe your opinions about the US?" with:

> Well the U.S. pretty much got a whole bunch of immigrants and foreigners to build it, got black people to keep it maintained, and just at the end of the day all everybody else sees is just a whole bunch of white people smiling, saying everything's all good, but really in reality, no it's not. (Interview, April 13, 2015)

Such a comment in other classes might be opposed by the teacher, but Ms. Bowling was encouraging of such candor and independent thought.

The Gramscian good sense that students had acquired through their lived experiences (e.g. with racism, with economic immobility, with the social problems associated with urban life) was now able to be acknowledged—no longer to be dismissed as inconsistent with common sense, such as American exceptionalism and the belief that life in America assures freedom and equal opportunities for all. Common sense cannot be wholly eliminated, however. As students began interrogating it and the role it plays in maintaining their consent to the oppressive order, they could begin imagining possibilities for a progressive hegemony that would serve their own interests, rather than those of the dominant group.

Several students said they trusted these critical teachers more than past teachers because they felt the latter had not presented history as accurately. Rather than foster disillusionment or cynicism, students' conscientization made them feel they were finally seeing, that their eyes were finally open to "the plain truth" (Roman, Interview, April 23, 2015). Some even thought that acknowledging injustices would produce the opposite outcome of disillusionment, that it would make students love the US more because they would know people are fighting to improve it. Amina explained,

> Actually [Ms. Ray's] class makes me love America more because people like her are what make America better. Because if there was nobody in America saying segregation is wrong, we would still be segregated. I would be sitting in the back of the bus (laughs), or..

you know just different things like that. Because if she teaches her students to you know stand up, or if she teaches her students to look at sexist ads and say, "Oh that's definitely sexist" when they might've just scrolled through the TV before her class, then I think she's making America a better place. And eventually if someone isn't patriotic, they will begin to love America because there are people saying "this is wrong" and then we're changing it to fix it and make it better. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

The thresholds students crossed toward greater conscientization of contemporary injustices included not only fuller awareness of these and questioning of prevailing common sense, but also an appreciation for the transformative potential of such conscientization. This appreciation, this sense that they could "see" where before reality had been obscured by fairy tale common sense, may encourage them to continue pursuing conscientization on their own. Some were even looking ahead to the critical education they would provide to their future children. Angela said she planned to tell her children, "I'll set you straight. This is why you have to pay attention and read everything" (Interview, April 13, 2015). If critical pedagogy opens thresholds not only to student conscientization but to their commitments to transfer this conscientization to others, perhaps with time a progressive hegemonic bloc (Jones, 2006) can be formed.

**Bottlenecks.** Given that contradictory consciousness affects us all, it is inevitable that conscientization of contemporary injustices would flow through some bottlenecks along the way. In elaborating on Gramsci's notion of contradictory consciousness, Femia (1981) explained that "elements of intellectual and moral approbation coexist in unsteady equilibrium with elements of apathy, resignation, and even hostility" (p. 25). The four major sources of these bottlenecks were hesitancy to always name racism, justification via comparison, individualistic thinking, and a belief in progress. In Chapter 7, I suggest implications for critical pedagogy in terms of methods teachers may use for navigating these bottlenecks.

***Hesitancy to always name racism.*** Even though in Chapter 5 I described some of the ways students were able to "call out" racism, at other times they demonstrated reluctance.

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Recognizing that the teachers and I are all White and in positions of power, I admit the students' statements in class and in interviews may not be what they would say in the absence of White people. However, a goal of critical pedagogy would be for students to voice their social critiques in the presence of those with the most power to create change. I present here a few examples of their reluctance, not as a critique of them as individuals, but as indications of a larger discourse of colorblindness (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). This pervading discourse in schools and society has so successfully mystified these students that they sometimes hesitate to name racism even if they have a teacher who regularly does so. The example I described of Ida's polite avoidance of controversial topics serves as evidence that students have been taught not to talk about race in schools. She even said "racism does not exist any more," but in context she seemed to mean legal segregation, not racism. When I later asked, "So you would say that racism is over now?" she answered,

> No. It's not over. But I think a lot of people have a better way of taming and controlling their inner feelings. Like it could be plenty of racist people but they know it's not allowed anymore, so they won't of course speak on it as freely as they would in the 1940s or 20s or 50s. (Interview, April 2, 2015)

> While Amina was explaining why she thinks it is more possible for a poor White person

to become rich than a poor, nonwhite immigrant, she said,

> I think the system--I don't want to say America is racist. Because I don't think America is racist. But I do think America does favor white people. Yeah. But I think every country pretty much favors White people, so. Or favors lighter-skinned people and European features and stuff like that. (Interview, April 1, 2015)

I cannot speculate what she sees as the distinction between "racism" and "favoring White people"; however, given the rest of her interview, it seemed that Amina did not want to critique America too harshly. She talked at length about the struggles her grandparents went through in immigrating to America to give their families better opportunities, so perhaps she felt it would be

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unappreciative of their sacrifices if she denounced the US as racist.

Other students would choose the phrase "certain people" or "this group" in place of saying African Americans or People of Color. For instance, in explaining the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Roman said "like how certain people can [vote] and certain people can't" (Interview, April 23, 2015) and Diane said the US needed to be more united "especially with racial tendencies, kind of like certain racial groups should like -- this group gets too much help and this group doesn't get enough" (Interview, April 8, 2015). Again, this could have been because their interviewer was White, but many students also used vague phrasing like this in their written responses to the warm-up question about the Langston Hughes poem mentioned previously. For instance, one student wrote, "some people had to give up their dreams due to uncontrollable circumstances, skin color, war" and another, "He was talking about because of the struggles many are going through to get to a higher class" (de-identified[14] written responses, March 11, 2015). Generally the Black students wrote "African Americans" in their responses, rather than vague verbiage like "some people" or "many" that most of the White and Latin@ students used.[15] It may have been easier for students, however, to use more racially specific language when discussing historical periods such as the Harlem Renaissance and Jim Crow era, than it was for them to specify racially oppressed groups today, given that the common sense they may either hold or think they are supposed to hold is that we live in a post-racial society (Dawson & Bobo, 2009). Teachers may need to do more than model that it is acceptable to call something racist; they may need to explain why it is not impolite or offensive to do so. They can do this by explaining that racism is not always referring to an individual character flaw but is also structural,

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[14] School district regulations limited my collection of student work to only items that had been de-identified.

[15] Since written work had to be de-identified, I had to rely on the teachers' perceptions and analyses of their students' work in such instances.

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meaning calling something racist is not necessarily insulting someone. I elaborate on this in the next section.

**Individualist Attribution Error.** As mentioned in the above section on police brutality, some students did not yet understand the structural nature of oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), viewing police misconduct and other discriminatory acts as signs only of an individual's character flaw. I am terming this tendency to interpret injustices as originating from individuals rather than structures the "individualist attribution error." This misattribution can also help to explain students' interpretations of women's clothing choices. Some of them refrained from criticizing the choice to wear revealing clothing because this would be criticizing the individual, and they believed the individual woman made this choice freely. If they understood that patriarchal society limits free choice by socializing women to view their options as either dressing to flatter their bodies or being dismissed as unattractive, then they could criticize the structures that promote skimpy clothing without feeling they were criticizing the wearer.

This error was also evident in how the students attributed the problem of income inequality. When I asked about whether the government should do more to help the poor, most thought about the homeless, rather than the millions of other Americans below the poverty line, including in some cases their own families. Their proposed solutions included individuals gaining jobs or education, either through their own efforts or with help from the government. No one considered the larger picture of how, without reforming our capitalist economic system, such individual efforts are unlikely to matter.

Although Ms. Ray wrote the definitions of *individual prejudice* and *institutional racism* on the board and led a discussion about the differences, students may not have fully understood their implications for several reasons. The terms *racism* and *oppression* are not used consistently

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in general discourse, potentially leading to students' confusion. For instance, when people cite *reverse racism*, they are neglecting the fact that forms of oppression, such as racism, are backed by institutional power; otherwise they are acts of discrimination, not oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Therefore a member of a dominated race cannot be accused of racism. Given the common confusion and misuses of these terms, critical teachers may need to spend several days teaching these concepts, addressing common misconceptions, and giving students opportunities to practice identifying the differences between institutionalized oppression and individual discrimination.

*Justification via comparison*. As mentioned in Chapter 5, students thought sexism occurred primarily in other countries, for instance where domestic violence goes unpunished. As a result, the more subtle ways sexism operates in the US, such as through objectification of women in advertising and the music industry, did not register as sexism to students. In fact, Kiya (perhaps the most critically conscious student in Ms. Bowling's class), blamed the women themselves for their own objectification: "I feel like the girls that try out for the music videos they degrade themselves when they bounce their butt up and down and stuff in the videos" (Class observation, March 13, 2015). Several of the young women in Ms. Bowling's class demonstrated consent to their own oppression, saying things like they wanted to "dress to impress" for parties so they "could compete with other girls" (Isabel, Class observation, March 13, 2015) and that they should have the freedom (or what they perceived as freedom) to choose what to wear.

A bottleneck along the path toward critiquing the lack of social mobility in the US was the failure to link this with our capitalist economic system. This also was undergirded by justification via comparison, in that the only other economic system students seemed to know—communism—was untenable in their view. They understood communism to mean severe

restriction of rights and, even more damning, a system that "doesn't work" because "we're humans and we want competition" (Matt, Interview, April 28, 2015). In general what students had learned about life in other countries, such as North Korea, conservative Islamic nations, and other states with restrictions on freedom of speech, left them with the impression that life was much better in the US than elsewhere. As a result, it was more difficult for them to identify and critique oppressive elements of American society than they may have been able to without such justification via comparison.

*Belief in progress*. Many comments students made in class and in interviews reflected the belief that society has progressed and that Americans are more tolerant and progressive now than they were in the past. For instance, when discussing the Red Scare, Parker (a typically very critical young Black woman) asked if something like that could happen now, given that people are more tolerant and supportive of equality. Although some students acknowledged the limits of progress, they still affirmed, "progress is definitely happening" (Matt, Interview, April 28, 2015). Amina stated, "We always come to a good place" (Interview, April 1, 2015). When Ms. Ray had students read the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program and then write their own ten points for today, many students had trouble thinking of more than two or three demands they would make for racial equality. This may not necessarily indicate a belief in progress, but it does suggest that students, even those in racially marginalized groups, cannot immediately call up a list of specific grievances they have regarding their marginalization. The common sense notion that we have more racial equality today as a result of the Civil Rights Movement leaves less room for good sense-based critical consciousness, such as that structures like mass incarceration act as slavery by another name (Alexander, 2012). Even though Ms. Ray said she specifically tried "not to frame it like history is naturally progressing" (Interview, September 19, 2015), the

notion of progress is so ingrained in both the national psyche and the typical presentation of history that it would be difficult for students to question it, even if their teachers explicitly did so (which did not occur in any of the classes I observed). In sum, although the teachers' explicit discussions of contemporary injustices did contribute to students' confidence in openly questioning some common sense beliefs (such as that we live in a post-racial society), bottlenecks included some hesitancy to name racism, the individualist attribution error, justification of via comparison, and a belief in progress.

**Political Action**

This dissertation focuses on conscientization; however, critical pedagogy emphasizes both conscientization and praxis. Freire (1970) defined praxis as action that is continually informed by reflection, in other words the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. For him, critical pedagogy for liberation cannot be "purely intellectual but must involve action" (1970, p. 65). Without action, conscientization can do nothing to transform the world. At the same time, conscientization may lead to action as it "assists students to transform their apathy— formerly nourished by their disempowerment—into *denunciation* of the previous oppressive reality and their *annunciation* into a viable, transformed existence" (Darder, 2012, p. 97). However, critics have charged that conscientization on its own does not automatically result in political engagement (Au, 2011). This section will discuss how this study sheds some light on this debate.

The classroom setting is not the ideal setting for studying to what extent students act on their developing critical reading of oppressive forces. Opportunities for participating in direct political action, such as protest against unjust laws, are few within the walls and tightly packed schedules of schools. I could at least gain some knowledge of students' plans to participate

politically in the future, however, through asking them about this in interviews. For the most part, they answered no. Many mentioned they would vote, but beyond that they had little interest in political participation. However, students did express a belief that individuals can effect social change. Thus one threshold crossed was a belief that emancipation is possible and that ordinary (and even young) people can contribute to its realization. The bottleneck, however, is that students did not personally plan to take part. This may have related to their teachers' approaches to teaching political activism. Thus the first section presents the teachers' approaches to establish the context in which students were forming beliefs about political participation and their preferences regarding their own involvement. The final section is a co-analysis by Ms. Ray and myself of her students' preference not to participate politically.

**Teaching philosophies regarding political action.** One potential reason students did not envision themselves engaging in transformative resistance is that this was not an aim either teacher identified as motivating her pedagogy. Ms. Bowling stated that her goals were for students to learn to critically interrogate information presented to them and their own resultant opinions and that they "begin to realize that they have the power to change the future. And how through voting and democracy, American history is their own. And that they can create it as they grow" (Interview, April 3, 2015). Although she did want students to see how they could shape society through voting, she did not allude to any more transformative actions. This quote points to two themes that emerged throughout my observations of her class: her emphasis on voting as the primary means to change society, and her casting of change as something students could do in the future, or "as they grow," as opposed to right now. For instance, after teaching about the Baltimore riots, Ms. Bowling closed by stating:

> But you guys are going to be the agents of change. You guys can change these things.
> You have to come up with things that will fix the system instead of going with it. It's not

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going to be easy. (Class observation, April 29, 2015)

After reading her students' interview transcripts, Ms. Bowling said she was excited to see how many planned to vote, but added:

> I would like to see them say, "Yeah I'd protest, And I would do this and I would do that." And maybe that's my fault because I didn't kind of highlight those options. I highlighted voting because voting is the easiest thing you can do right. It's low risk. It doesn't take much time, and anyone can vote that's registered and is a citizen. So I think they could do *more*, but I'm happy that at least they are going to vote. (Interview, September 26, 2015).

Students noticed Ms. Bowling's stress on voting. For instance, Feisty said, "Ms. Bowling is very votey. Like always telling us that we should vote if we want to change things" (Interview, April 22, 2015). Convincing youth to vote is certainly an important and much-needed element of critical urban education, especially given the low voter turnout among young people in the US and the civic empowerment gap that exists between middle-class White youth and students of color or from low-income families (Levinson, 2012). However the transformation of society that critical theorists like Freire and Gramsci imagined is unlikely to result from voting alone. Within our current *Citizens United* context, in the unlikely case that a candidate was interested in substantial social change, individual votes are dwarfed by a few mega-donors that essentially control elections (Lessig, 2014; Weiner, 2015). These students may not yet be aware of this, given that most of them had not yet taken a civics class and this issue had not come up in these history classes. Although Ms. Ray was hoping and expecting they would learn this in civics, she also mentioned that discussing "how types of power, be it gender or financial, influence the political and government system" was "something that I could be doing a better job of" (Interview, September 19, 2015). Here she reflects an agreement with research that has suggested that critical identity formation requires students to be critically conscious of impediments to social justice in general (Smyth, 2014), or in this case to democratic political justice in particular.

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Whereas Ms. Bowling chose not to promote direct action out of a belief that voting is something students could do more easily and with lower risk, Ms. Ray chose not to promote it seemingly out of a concern that she not dictate to students how they should operate in the world. Whenever she referred to students potentially acting as change agents in the future, she added clauses like "if they want to" or "if they decide to" and stated, "not all my students are interested in correcting every injustice, and it's not their job necessarily to do that" (Interview, March 28, 2015). She explained that, "sometimes recognizing that things are problematic is the baseline goal, right. Like not becoming an activist, not dedicating your life to social change, but recognizing that, oh that actually *is* messed up." Her other comments suggested that part of the reason this was the baseline goal is that this may be as far as some students would get in the single year she taught them, in her view. Another reason may be related to her pedagogical philosophy, discussed earlier in this chapter, that she should not let her politics prevent students from exploring theirs or challenge the values instilled in church and at home.

***An addendum based on co-analysis.*** After sending the first draft of this dissertation to both participants, Ms. Ray emailed me her feedback, including an elaboration on the above point. She added that, "embedded in that desire for students to choose their own paths is awareness of my own white and class privilege" (email communication, January 22, 2016). She went on to explain:

> While I hope my students will learn the skills they need to critique society and change it if they want, I never want to burden them with the responsibility, as individuals, of dismantling oppressive systems, especially considering that with respect to race, the system was built by my ancestors, not theirs. It wouldn't be fair for me as a white teacher to make them feel obligated to do that. It is the oppressor's job to stop oppression. If I taught white students or a more heterogeneous class, that might be different, and I might be more heavy-handed about emphasizing the importance of checking their privilege, being openly anti-racist, etc. (email communication, January 22, 2016)

This is an excellent point and helped me to better understand how her position as a member of

the dominant racial group made her hesitant to lecture her Students of Color about how they need to actively fight racism. I agree that this would be hypocritical and problematic coming from a White teacher who was not herself actively fighting racism (which was not the case for Ms. Ray). I wonder, though, if there are ways an activist White teacher like Ms. Ray could invite her students of all colors to fight with her, emphasizing that White people do shoulder more of the responsibility as the ones benefiting from the current order but that dismantling racism will require involvement from all groups, just as abolition of slavery required action by both White policy makers as well as free and enslaved African Americans.

Secondly, race is only one oppressive structure that needs dismantling. Ms. Ray could also more explicitly encourage her students to fight for other forms of justice, such as women's and immigrant rights, equality for the LGBTQ community, and equal access to a livable income, among many other issues. Nevertheless, I was grateful for her critical feedback which both helped me understand her hesitation to preach direct action and offered an insight into why many other White teachers may feel the same reluctance to do so.

**Thresholds crossed.** Despite students' limited desires to be politically active, several thresholds in this area were crossed, including an interest in staying politically informed and the recognition that ordinary individuals can change society. In a time when only 34% of college freshmen think that keeping up with politics is important (Galston, 2004), it is encouraging that many of the students in both classes expressed interest and knowledge in areas such as presidential campaigns, Supreme Court decisions, and local issues such as teacher pay. Feisty, Alex, Angela, Roman, Isabel, Josephine, and William indicated they regularly paid attention to the news. Kiya stated,

> Kiya: I'm actually now trying to get more into watching the news, and politics and watching how the president has those conferences on TV. I'm trying to start watching that.

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So I can learn more.

Interviewer: That's great. What spurred you to want to do that?

T: This class. I love history. I love history class. . . [Ms. Bowling] introduces new stuff to us that I haven't really thought about. And it makes you think. And some of it expands my mind. It makes me want to research more and more, just learn more about the government and everything that we talk about. (Interview, April 9, 2015)

Students also displayed critical hope that ordinary people can effect significant social change. Even though the content of U.S. history curriculum consists largely of political leaders, wars, technological innovations, major legislation and court cases, and other topics that may lead students to view power as wielded only by a select few, the emphasis on organized resistance in these classes helped students to also see power as possessed by ordinary individuals. Josephine cited Ms. Ray's lesson about Malala Yousafzai as helping her to realize the power of individuals and even youth. Melony mentioned writing letters to representatives and Amina said that social media can be used to raise awareness: "Even though you might not think maybe one retweet or something isn't important, it really is. Because the more people that see it, the more it will be out there" (Interview, April 1, 2015). Because several students mentioned the recent successes of the gay rights movement, it appeared this good sense observation undergirded their optimism that progressive social change is possible.

A few also equated power with ideological influence—a pairing that some saw as positive and others as negative.  Ida believed wealthy and famous people have power "over other people's minds" (Interview, April 2, 2015) and provided as an example that Michael Jordan influences people to spend more money than they have on overpriced sneakers. Amina also mentioned celebrities, but argued teachers have similar ideological influence:

I think if you're a celebrity, you have a lot of power. You can say three words and everyone will be like, "Ok I agree with you." That's why I think what Ms. Ray is doing is so awesome is because she has so much influence over people. Because before, people

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wouldn't think twice about a certain thing, but now they're looking at it and they're like, "Ok that's wrong." (Interview, April 1, 2015)

Thus power as influence can negatively impact people to act against their own interests (e.g., in the sneaker example, consumerism trumping personal financial stability), or it can support a progressive hegemony, for instance through teachers helping students to recognize injustices.

Several students included a caveat to the reality of individual power: that individuals need support from a collective. Dolores, Diane, and Roman all explained that a person has less impact acting alone than as part of a larger group. Roman stated, "You can't change the system unless you have like a lot of backing, like momentum of change. Like nothing could happen if I like—I'd just be labeled off as one of those crazy bloggers or something" (Interview, April 23, 2015). This is an important threshold considering that young people tend to have more confidence in personalized acts such as their own volunteering than in collective action "whose consequences they see as remote, opaque, and impossible to control" (Galston, 2004, p. 263).

Students' faith in the power of collective action is consistent with lessons from class. Ms. Ray did not teach the civil rights movement through the actions of Martin Luther King Jr. and other individuals, but rather highlighted the *organizations* that achieved major gains in the 1950s and 1960s. She explained, "We're going to unpack the four organizations that we know about already that are doing this type of work. It doesn't just magically happen" (Class observation, March 27, 2015). This is an important departure from the individualist ideology supported by curriculum focused on presidents and heroes, with its accompanying anti-democratic message that certain individuals matter more than others (Levinson, 2012). In sum, the good sense made possible through students' daily observations of the influence of social media and the relatively rapid gains for gay rights was corroborated by their classroom lessons on the power of individuals such as Malala Yousafsai and activist organizations such as SNCC, the United

Farmworkers Movement, the Black Panthers, and many others.

**Bottlenecks.** Values from church and home and other ideological influences on common sense, however, often contradict good sense, resulting in contradictory consciousness. For instance, one of Ms. Ray's students, William, said that as a Jehovah's Witness he did not plan to become politically active because all governments would soon "be replaced by God's Kingdom. So I'm not trying to change things now. I'm just trying to survive until the new kingdom" (Interview, April 29, 2015). Although other students did not say so as explicitly, they implied similar beliefs that events unfold according to a divine plan. Diane, for instance, believed that everything "happens the way it should in due time" (Interview, April 8, 2015). Such views do not encourage political action, since a predetermined course of events renders useless any attempts to transform society.

Among students who did not insinuate a belief in a divine plan, there was little interest in political action for other reasons. Although all recognized contemporary injustices and most believed ordinary individuals do have the power to effect change, they did not feel compelled to act either because they did not perceive the problems as affecting them directly or because they did not know how they could effect change. Dolores, for example, said she would protest against police power, but when I asked if there were other issues that could be seen as the civil rights issues of today, she answered, "not any that affect me" (Interview, April 14, 2015). This was surprising given her earlier interview comments regarding discrimination against Latinas and undocumented immigrants. Ida, who you may recall asked during the lesson on the Baltimore riots if we might ever have slavery again, struggled to articulate social changes she would like to see. When I asked what she would change if she held political office, she answered to tighten restrictions on travel due to the Ebola outbreak. Other students found political engagement

unappealing either because politics appeared unpleasant, they would rather just "go with the flow" (Roman, Interview, April 23), or they "don't know how to rule a country" (Melony, Interview, April 2, 2015). The following excerpt from the interview with Diane represents the gist of many students' opinions towards politics:

> Interviewer: Would you consider yourself a political person?
>
> Diane: Nooo! No no no no no.
>
> Interviewer: What does that mean to you?
>
> Diane: Running for office, like government jobs, running for senator, even running for president or vice president. Like that type of just—I like to watch it. I'm not for it. I feel like it's a lot of pressure put on those type of people. And I might be able to do well under pressure, but I don't want to find out anytime soon! (Interview, April 8, 2015)

Two students said they had actually planned to go into politics, but had changed their minds. Feisty said she changed her mind because she realized, "I'd get highly upset with people that don't think like I do" (Interview, April 22, 2015). Angela said she used to want to be a lawyer but decided it seemed like "too much work" (Interview, April 13, 2015). Perceptions of pressure, excessive work, or conflict had diverted students' interest away from a career in politics. The last influence—conflict—is disheartening considering Ms. Bowling's efforts to teach for dissent so that students would feel comfortable and capable disagreeing with others in the public sphere. Feisty may have had a longer journey to feeling comfortable with conflict, however, as she held vastly different political opinions from her parents and therefore may have had more ideological conflict at home than other students had.

The other subtheme emerging from these data is that many students perceived political involvement as something that one does only through a career in politics. This is a dramatically different commitment than planning to engage during one's personal time outside of work in another chosen field. Students at Health Academy were largely planning to enter careers in

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health sciences, so it was especially important for them to view political engagement as possible outside of a full-blown political career. The ones who did make this distinction tended to think of involvement as voting and were not able to generate ideas of ways to participate beyond this.

**Co-analysis of the disinterest in participation.** I had some hypotheses as to why students would not express stronger desire to directly confront the injustices they acknowledged, but these were augmented by the analysis offered by Ms. Ray. As mentioned above, I conjectured part of the reason may be that their teachers either focused primarily on voting or prioritized letting students decide for themselves whether they would participate, taking into consideration their religious and family-related values and the avoidance of pain associated with critical awareness. In the first case students may have thought voting was a sufficient means of action for addressing injustices, and in the second students may have needed stronger and more frequent encouragement to become involved, particularly because Ms. Bowling was right that engagement beyond voting requires more time, effort, and risk.  Perhaps also my inclusion of the word *political* in the question turned off some students, many of whom seemed to associate politicians with corruption and thirst for power and therefore politics with unsavoriness and conflict. Most also connected the word only with national governmental bodies, rather than state or local ones. This could deter participation as research suggests high school students see governmental systems as inaccessible and care more about local issues than national or global ones (Schmidt, 2008; Seltzer-Kelly, 2009).

Ms. Ray's analysis of students' disinterest touched on a deeper and more systemic root of the problem. She supposed that they were not born into a class that has firsthand knowledge of electoral politics and thus may not have "thought about why certain people would be more interested in that than others, and also more why they might see that more as an option"

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(Interview, September 19, 2015). In other words, the students did not have the social and cultural capital (not to mention financial) to gain political office, and at some unconscious level they may realize this. In her book *No Citizen Left Behind*, Meira Levinson (2012) explored in depth this root of what she called the civic empowerment gap. She reported, "People who earn over $75,000 annually are politically active at up to six times the rate of people who earn under $15,000, whether measured by working for a campaign, serving on the board of an organization, participating in protests, or contacting officials" (p. 34) and that there is a racial civic attitude divide in individuals' trust in government. However, she also reported that trust in government is not necessary for political engagement. Especially among African Americans, "when mistrust in government is combined with a healthy sense of political efficacy, political participation may remain steady or even increase" (p. 38). The key then is not to foster students' trust in the government, a goal that may be unachievable if one is also teaching the realities of electoral politics and the social reproduction of power, but rather to foster their efficacy. This implication will be discussed further in the next chapter. Additional implications related to students' disinterest not only in electoral politics but also in direct action such as protest, will also be discussed.

**Thresholds and Bottlenecks Summary**

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which students moved from contradictory consciousness to greater critical consciousness, as well as the ways in which common sense was still apparent in their thinking. I used the metaphors of thresholds and bottlenecks, respectively, to categorize these phenomena. Imagining residual contradictory consciousness as bottlenecks, rather than barriers or setbacks, reminds us that these are not roadblocks but rather just narrower and more difficult portions of the path toward greater critical consciousness.

I grouped the thresholds crossed under three headings, each corresponding to one of the three categories of approaches to critical pedagogy demonstrated by these teachers: (a) perspective-taking, complexity, and empathy (which corresponds to "dialogue"), (b) confronting contemporary injustices, and (c) political action. In terms of the first, students were able to take on varying and even conflicting perspectives, to empathize, to think beyond binaries, and to complicate their own thinking. However, bottlenecks related to contradictory consciousness included instances of empathizing indiscriminately, defending regressive perspectives, and withholding judgment of oppressors. In terms of *confronting contemporary injustices*, students showed awareness of historical lineages of contemporary injustices, confidence in openly questioning common sense, and appreciation for the transformative potential of conscientization. However, some also hesitated to name racism, struggled to see oppression as structural rather than individual, and justified inequities as being at least better than in the past or in other countries. Thresholds related to *political action* were that students saw power as possessed by ordinary individuals and more effective when used collectively rather than individually; they also were aware that influence is an important form of power (i.e. governing, enforcing laws, and building corporate empires are not the only forms of power). A major bottleneck in this area was that students expressed little desire in personally engaging in political action, even while they acknowledged that youth can be powerful.

## CHAPTER 7: SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

**Introduction**

In this dissertation, I set out to explore how critical pedagogies might take shape in urban U.S. History classrooms and how students respond to these forms of teaching. Critical research has uncovered the ways that schools "play a major cultural role as sites where ideologies are produced, reproduced, and perpetuated in society" (Darder, 2012, p. 31). While much research has illuminated the ways schools reproduce dominant hegemonic interests (Foley, 1990; McLaren, 1989) and how students resist (Giroux, 1983; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Willis, 1977), few have unpacked how teachers and students might together, within one classroom, resist this reproduction. In this study I sought to deepen our understanding of critical pedagogy by integrating data on teachers and students in order to expand upon efforts to develop a grounded theory of practice in critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Both the critical pedagogies and the student responses observed represent a varied and complex range of characteristics. The teachers, though both critical, had different backgrounds and pedagogical goals that marked their distinct enactments of critical pedagogy. Their schools, though both public, Title I, and located less than five miles apart, were different enough in terms of size and structure (comprehensive versus magnet) that some distinctions were noticeable between the dynamics in each classroom and the perspectives of the students. The students in the two classes were more similar than different however, in the areas in which they had developed critical consciousness and the dominant ideologies that sustained some level of contradictory consciousness. Thus to compare the two cases would not yield the most robust answers to the

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research questions.

Rather, in this chapter I will pull together the most prominent themes from across both cases to support the major finding of this dissertation, which is that critical pedagogy can enhance conscientization but contradictory consciousness persists via dominant ideologies and cultural hegemony even in critical classrooms. In the second half of this chapter, I will describe what I consider to be the implications of these results for pedagogy and for research. In discussing implications for practice, I will return to some of the unintended consequences of these teachers' pedagogies (e.g., students defending regressive hegemony) and address each with a suggestion of additions to these pedagogies that might augment conscientization. These suggestions are compiled in Table 4 in order to complement Figure 1, which presented the approaches already used by these two teachers (located in Chapter 4). By pairing Figure 1 and Table 4, readers have a brief overview of both the observed and proposed elements of critical pedagogy in history classrooms. Finally, I will suggest future directions for research on critical pedagogy in classrooms.

As this is a postcritical ethnography, I would also like to open this chapter with a brief critique that I reflexively turn back on myself as the researcher (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). First I need to say that this dissertation has probably not done justice to the remarkable teaching of Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling. Their pedagogies, which are at the same time inclusive of elements of U.S. History often omitted (e.g., Lavender Scare, FDR's Black Cabinet, and current sociopolitical conditions) and exciting to students, inspire me and I hope the readers of this paper. I wish I could have learned from them before I taught U.S. history at an urban high school, and I told them this frequently. I could easily have written a dissertation that solely presented the strengths of their pedagogies as models to be emulated or adapted for other critical teachers. I

had plenty of data to do so. However, I chose also to present the bottlenecks in students'

conscientization in order also to provide readers with fodder for imagining even further

possibilities.

Second, although I did attempt to analyze this data jointly with the teachers, through

daily debriefings after each class and having them think-aloud while reading their students'

transcripts, I recognize the final analysis is primarily my own. While they did provide feedback

on a first draft of the dissertation, a more participatory project would have had them, as well as

their students, involved in all stages of the analysis. However, I hope that by providing the

teachers with extra glimpses into their students' thoughts, a supportive colleague to share their

own thoughts and questions with, and my suggestions for addressing bottlenecks[16], I have at least

achieved the postcritical aim of non-exploitation through pursuing benefits for them as well as

myself (Gunzenhauser, 2004).

**Synthesis of Responses to Critical Pedagogy: Conscientization Bounded by Cultural Hegemony**

**Evidence of conscientization.** Although dominant ideologies related to individualism,

meritocracy, and American exceptionalism delimited the extent to which students could

articulate critiques of capitalism and other power structures, the students were able to recognize

many ways in which life in the US is not as equitable as the dominant hegemonic bloc would

have people—especially students in the reproductive context of schools (Giroux, 1983)—believe.

Several students described prior social studies classes as downplaying the atrocities of

colonization and slavery, suggesting that some of their schooling had more closely resembled the

assimilative education observed by Bowles and Gintis (1976) than these classrooms did. The

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[16] After reading the draft, Ms. Ray wrote, "I want the bottleneck/suggestions for critical pedagogy table blown up poster-size on my classroom wall. Reading that was by itself the best P.D. [professional development] I've had all year" (e-mail communication, January 22, 2016).

problem with assimilative education, still commonly found in social studies and other classes (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Seixas, 2001; Urrieta, 2004), is that it whitewashes social problems thus preventing students from identifying them, much less imagining ways to redress them. In addition, students with firsthand knowledge of social inequities distrust curriculum that attempts to minimize these in the effort to promote complacency with the status quo (Gilbert, 2011; Levinson, 2012). For the students in this study, the sudden exposure to critique, where there had previously only been celebration and identification with the state, led some to become more interested in learning history and prone to question the common sense instilled through their prior schooling. They also began to appreciate the historicity of knowledge, which

> challenges the traditional emphasis on historical continuities and historical development. Instead, it offers a mode of analysis that stresses the breaks, discontinuities, conflicts, differences, and tensions in history, all which serve in bringing to light the centrality of human agency as it presently exists, as well as within its possibilities for change. (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 11)

In terms of possibilities for change specifically, students referred to their lessons on social movements and individual resistance in explaining why they believed ordinary individuals, even youth, have the power to effect change. This is an important step toward political efficacy and action (Levinson, 2012).

All of the students interviewed were able to identify at least some of the ways the US fails to fulfill its promises of equality and justice for all. The most common critique was its failure to establish racial equality. The appallingly frequent deaths of unarmed, young Black men and the messages their deaths sent about racial disparities in cities like Ferguson and Baltimore raised awareness among students of all races. Many students also felt equality and justice were not provided for immigrants and the LGBTQ community, even students who had had few personal interactions with individuals from either group. In these ways they were beginning to

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critically examine current realities and in doing so, recognize that their good sense (Gramsci,

1971) observations of the world were more trustworthy than the common sense framing of

American society as equitable and just.

Students did not lose hope as they developed this critical consciousness, however. They

all believed that society could progress toward greater equality, in part because most also

believed it already was. This belief in progress contributed to the bottleneck that they felt no

urgency to engage in political action; however it also undergirded their hope for a better society.

Several saw their U.S. History class as evidence that ordinary people (i.e. their teachers) were

fighting to improve social conditions. In these ways they demonstrated the critical hope that

Freire (1992) argued is necessary to create change.

This outlook was reflected in their conceptions of what it means to be patriotic or a "good

citizen." Although many defined citizenship in terms of obeying laws and helping others (as do

most American students; see Chiodo & Martin, 2005 and Hickey, 2002 for examples), several

also believed their history teachers showed patriotism in teaching them about injustices. They

argued that patriotism is not blind loyalty, but rather a commitment to the ideals of one's country,

in this case freedom and justice for all. As such, a patriot can and should critique in order to push

her society to more fully live up to these ideals.

These conceptions of citizenship and patriotism are more in line with the critical

citizenship outlined by Andreotti (2006) and Johnson and Morris (2010) than with the more

common traditional citizenship discourses of patriotic support for one's country and concern

with individual liberties (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Because critical citizenship requires the

ability to challenge the status quo (Johnson & Morris, 2010), the students' alignment with this

conception reflects a level of conscientization that is absent from those who define citizenship in

terms of unity supported by forms of mainstream participation such as volunteering (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

These traditional forms of citizenship are far more common in schools (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006) and ensure that schools support the reproduction of capitalist ideologies (Foley, 1990) through maintaining consent from those most harmed by it (Gramsci, 1971). Thus, the critical pedagogy in these classrooms opened up possibilities for transformation not only through students' abilities to call out oppression, but also through their definition of a citizen as one who confronts social hierarchies and fights for change.

**Regressive hegemonic boundaries: Patriotism, individualism, and meritocracy.** Despite students' growing ability to critique American policies and social conditions, when I asked for their general opinions of the US, most said it was a great country and they were proud to live here. Several admitted there were probably better places and that many people in other countries dislike the US, but they still would not want to live elsewhere. They based this preference on their perception that the US protects rights and offers opportunities that are unavailable in other countries. Some students appeared reluctant to be ungrateful for these privileges, particularly students from immigrant families (Amina and Dolores) who wished to acknowledge the sacrifices their parents or grandparents made to move here.

Such appreciation may be intentionally or unintentionally encouraged by educators, many of whom presumably wish to foster students' happiness and recognition of the privileges they enjoy. However, this should not come at the expense of questioning the common sense misperception that such privileges are well distributed across segments of society. Without such questioning, complacency will prevent any substantial social transformation. So too will the students' justification via comparison. A sole focus on the ways in which life in the US beats life

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elsewhere leaves no space for imagining how life here could be better. Thus consent from the subaltern is preserved, and along with it the power of the dominant hegemonic bloc (Gramsci, 1971).

Just as justification via comparison stunted conscientization, so too did what I call the individualist attribution error—the tendency to interpret injustices as originating from individuals rather than structures (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Several read the police racial profiling cases as examples of individual racists, rather than manifestations of structural racism. Some could identify individual advertisements as sexist, but did not understand that women "choosing" to dress in revealing clothes in order to "compete" is a symptom of structural sexism, not a result of women's autonomy (Nussbaum, 1995). Roman thought the examples of women and racial minorities rising to positions of power showed that progress is occurring. This belief supports hegemony by preserving consent from subaltern classes who take these exceptions as indications that racism and sexism are over or ending. When discussing welfare, students tended to focus on what the recipients should do differently (e.g., get more education, try to depend less on the government), rather than how our economic system needed to change. In fact, critiquing our economic system was one area of conscientization in which students showed the least growth.

This would probably not surprise many Neo-Marxists. In this view, preservation of capitalism is the objective, with all the other dominant ideologies serving only to support it (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale & McLaren, 2011). For instance belief in a divine plan preserves consent to the dominant capitalist hegemony by rendering irrational any attempts to fight for radical change. Such an outlook might help to explain, at least in part, some students' lack of interest in fighting for social transformation.

A dominant ideology that is particularly central to the preservation of capitalism

and that persisted despite critical pedagogy was meritocracy (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2011). Students were averse to the idea of communism because they wanted the ability to earn more as a result of hard work and to know that each person was getting their just deserts. Closely tied to meritocracy is the bootstrap thinking (Darder, 2012) that was implied in some students' contentions that people on welfare should try to be less dependent. They also suggested that low-income minorities in poor neighborhoods like Sandtown (Freddie Gray's neighborhood in Baltimore) should educate themselves so they could improve their communities. These common sense ideas also secure consent to capitalism through proliferation of the myth that the subaltern can overcome their status through hard work. Even though many students recognized that the American dream is a myth, they were not yet expanding this to a recognition that meritocracy is also a myth.

**Dominant ideologies eclipse identity-based differences.** Although I purposefully interviewed students from a variety of ethnoracial backgrounds in the expectation that responses might vary accordingly, identity-based differences were not as salient as commonalities across groups. This may not have been true had I interviewed different students from these classes, or if the teachers and I were not White. However, given the candidness of many of their responses (e.g., Angela's opening comment about immigrants and Black people building the US while White people think everything is fine), I never got the impression students were censoring their answers. Rather I interpreted these commonalities as signs that dominant ideologies may be more powerful for high school students sharing a critical teacher than identity-based differences in race consciousness, gender consciousness, or the like. For instance, both male and female students subscribed to dominant ideologies about gender, such as that women should make efforts to be attractive for men (Nussbaum, 1995).

Likewise, perspectives on welfare were similar among students from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Although many said the US could do more to help the poor, these statements were often accompanied by a criticism of welfare recipients as "taking advantage" of government assistance and not doing enough to help themselves. This is consistent with the dominant American discourse on welfare and the tendency for Americans to be misinformed in an antiwelfare direction (Fong, Bowles, & Gintis, 2006). The larger issue than misinformation, however, is the failure to see the structural nature of the problem of poverty. This tendency to see individual effort as the solution to the structural problem of income inequality was equally displayed among students of all socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as equally among White students and Students of Color.

At the same time, progressive ideas were equally espoused by students of all backgrounds. For instance, both criticized the US's poor treatment of immigrants and discrimination against same-sex couples. Both thought it was important for history students to learn the truth about the genocide following Columbus's so-called "discovery" of the New World and that presidential support for emancipation and later desegregation are often exaggerated. A cross-cultural solidarity around these issues was evident.

There are likely several contributors to these similarities across cultural backgrounds, apart from the content of their U.S. History courses and the examples set by their teachers. For one, the students lived in the same relatively progressive, diverse city and attended two diverse schools that allowed curricular freedom. At both schools, many students had shared other critical teachers who had already encouraged them to question the status quo. However, we might still expect some differences among students because many had grown up in other locations (e.g., Isabella and Amina were from the New York City area, Angela was from Philadelphia, and Kiya

was from Virginia).

In any case, the ideological similarity among students has several implications. One, it serves as evidence for the power of hegemony to ensure all segments of society consent to the dominant order. In other words, even as students develop critical consciousness with regard to race or other power structures, they continue to display support for capitalism and patriarchy regardless of the negative impacts either of these structures has on them personally. This is what Gramsci (1971) called contradictory consciousness, a characteristic we all possess. However the ideological similarities also suggest that a progressive hegemonic bloc could form which would join these groups in a unified struggle for power (Ives, 2004). Hope for such an outcome rises with the growth of more critiques that are shared across lines of race, gender, nationality, and other identity markers. If regressive hegemony can be more powerful than identity-based differences, so too perhaps can progressive hegemony.

**Implications for Critical Pedagogy Practice**

I recognize that in our neoliberal age of accountability and standardization, some worry there is little room for critical pedagogy in public schools (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Fears that it would take time away from the curriculum or invoke negative reactions from administrators or parents may prevent many educators from attempting it. Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling said that these did not constrain their abilities to develop students' critical consciousness, citing administrative support and their beliefs that their pedagogies prepare students just as well for end of course exams as traditional methods would. Nevertheless, I acknowledge it is a widely shared and understandable concern. I hope that this study will instill some confidence that critical pedagogy in the age of accountability is possible however. The practices observed here support McLaren's (2009) contention that there is "relative autonomy

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within school sites that allows forms of resistance to emerge" (p. 68). Other scholars have pointed out that teachers act as curricular gatekeepers (Thornton, 2008) in that their everyday decisions about what and how to teach may be just as influential as the formal curricula and state standards.

As described in the literature review, the definition of critical pedagogy in this dissertation is more of an orientation and commitment than it is a concrete set of practices (Fishman & Haas, 2009), a definition that also allows more flexibility for teachers to identify as critical pedagogues even in schools that allow for less autonomy. As Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) rightly contended, "there does not exist a formula or homogenous representation for the universal implementation of any form of critical pedagogy" (p. 9). The enactment of critical pedagogies should vary greatly depending on the context of the school and classroom. The more teachers understand the social and political contexts of the communities, nations, and world in which they are teaching, "the more rigorous and critical education becomes" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 32).

Thus there are many forms that critical pedagogy can take, and this dissertation presents just two examples. Although the two classrooms studied are located just five miles from each other, the variation in school context and teaching approaches distinguish the cases so significantly that the cases provide two fairly divergent visions of critical pedagogy. This serves as further evidence that there are a range of instructional approaches that may be consistent with critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009), and researchers should not attempt to find or define one ideal example to which all educators should aspire. Readers should thus carefully take into account their own contexts when considering the applicability of the visions described here to their own teaching practices. Given the importance of reflexivity in praxis, educators

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should use these examples and suggestions as starting points for developing their own contextually appropriate form of critical pedagogy.

**Two sets of approaches to critical pedagogy.** I have tried not to focus this dissertation on comparing the two teachers or classrooms, in order to gain a deeper and more complex answer to the research question of what forms critical pedagogy may take. Each teacher used a range of approaches and strategies so I analyzed these independently, rather than as Ms. Ray's set versus Ms. Bowling's set. For simplicity however, I have divided the first section into the approaches of each teacher. Practitioners and theorists can draw from these examples ideas of possibilities for critical pedagogy. The second section, in which I offer suggestions for furthering critical pedagogy, returns to a more integrated treatment of the two cases, as the suggestions address bottlenecks that were usually seen across both classrooms.

*Ms. Ray: Calling out oppression, but couching it in resistance.* For Ms. Ray, critical consciousness consisted firstly of naming injustices. Having studied history and women's studies in her undergraduate education, and having a student population that was predominantly Black and female, Ms. Ray wanted her students to understand history from the perspectives of those whose stories are rarely told, as opposed the more common curriculum of history as written by the victors or oppressors. She also resisted the tendency to teach Black history through examples of extraordinary individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr., instead highlighting the oft-neglected agents of social change such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Kathleen Cleaver, and Claudette Colvin. In doing so, she was promoting civic empowerment through shifting the "focus from distant heroes and their accomplishments to more 'ordinary role models' and their specific techniques of civic engagement, especially of collective action" (Levinson, 2012, p. 56).

She "called out" injustices, as she termed it, not only to raise students' awareness of them,

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but also to encourage students to do the same both now and in the future. As Students of Color from mostly low-income families, her students probably had firsthand experiences with injustice but suppressed realization of these out of self-protection or the dominance of common sense over good sense (Gramsci, 1971). By calling out injustices, Ms. Ray was helping students to rely more on their good sense observations of the world and creating space—in the typically reproductive and reifying context of school—for students to engage in praxis through naming the world themselves (Freire, 1970). By creating a space in which it was common for students of all backgrounds to join in calling out injustices and having their critiques applauded by an authority, and in this case a member of the White middle class, the groundwork for a progressive hegemonic bloc was being laid.

The complement to Ms. Ray's approach of naming oppression was teaching that whenever there has been oppression in history, it has been met with resistance. She felt this was important so that students did not become cynical or hopeless, but rather saw possibilities for improvement. She not only taught that organized resistance occurred, but also deconstructed common myths about them and taught the specific åies used so that students understood specifically how social movements make gains.  She had students use primary sources to "bust" the myths that the Civil Rights Movement occurred spontaneously in the 1950s and only in the South, that it consisted primarily of extraordinary men with women only behind the scenes, that *Brown vs. Board of Education* led to immediate school desegregation, and that John F. Kennedy was in total support. When teaching Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, she resisted the tendency to depict them as the violent counterpart to the peaceful elements of the Civil Rights Movement, and instead explained the justification for armed self-defense and encouraged students to consider which of the Black Panthers' Ten Points are demands that are still needed

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today. Ms. Ray taught the Lavender Scare and resistance to it (topics rarely if ever included in textbooks or standards) to ensure students also realized the long history of the LGBTQ rights movement. By highlighting these historical examples of resistance, she helped her students of racial and sexual minority groups recognize, like bell hooks (1990), the "distinction between the marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility" (p. 153). From this location of possibility, students now armed with knowledge of the various forms that resistance has historically taken, may have greater efficacy to engage in resistance themselves.

*Ms. Bowling: Dissent, nonconformity, and unfixing opinions.* Unlike Ms. Ray, Ms. Bowling was not a historian by training. Her undergraduate degree instead was in economics. She still taught counternarratives and the contested nature of historical accounts; however, her priorities were less related to students' deep understanding of historical events and more related to their abilities to form independent opinions about an issue, and reconsider their preconceived opinions in light of new evidence. To her, this was an important objective of education because too much of life outside of schools promotes conformity. Although she did not cite Gramsci or other critical theorists, her view echoes their contention that the man-in-the-mass unquestioningly absorbs dominant ideologies, even those that oppose one's self interest (Gramsci, 1971). Her students were already in this mass, both within and outside of school, and she recognized this. She called it "the homogenous glob." For them to become critically conscious of the ways these ideologies maintain oppression, they would need to practice independent thought and dissent. They would also need to question the opinions they had already formed, most of which had been formed in the mass.

This represents an extension of critical pedagogy's focus on conscientization. Freire

(1970) and others (e.g., Darder, 2012; Kincheloe, 2008) have stated that the goal of conscientization is to challenge oppression and how power operates to maintain social hierarchies, but few have specified how to promote such conscientization in public school classrooms that have fewer opportunities for problem-posing methodology than Freire had with his adult students in Brazil. Some social justice pedagogies that draw on critical theory offer specific approaches that can be used to help students recognize oppression, such as hip hop pedagogy (Akom, 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2006), critical race pedagogy (Jennings & Lynn, 2005), and ethnic studies (Cabrera, Meza, Romero, & Rodríguez, 2013). However few of these are specific about ways to promote students' independent thought, comfort with nonconformity and dissent, and questioning of the opinions they have formed as part of the mass. The examples of whole-class discussions from Ms. Bowling's classroom offer one glimpse into how a critical educator might facilitate the practice and development of these skills. Paired with confidence in identifying and calling out injustices, these skills can also contribute to a foundation for progressive hegemony.

**Bottlenecks and suggestions for addressing them.** No student in either class walked away at the end of the semester determined to fight for radical social change. This does not mean that the critical pedagogies of these teachers, or critical pedagogy in general, failed. As I have argued above, the power of dominant ideologies and their pervasiveness in all aspects of students' lives outside of these classrooms (e.g., families, church, popular culture, other classes) are probably too strong for one or two years with a critical teacher to transform students into agents of social change. In addition, education in the confines of a classroom offer limited opportunities for students to actually engage politically. Extra-curricular and community-based organizations are needed to supplement the work of critical teachers in giving students firsthand experience

with political engagement so that they understand what it entails and that it does not require a career in politics. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) found that school programs that most effectively encourage civic engagement included partnerships with local community organizations and opportunities to put lessons on democracy and civic education into practice (Galston, 2004).

The constraints imposed by regressive hegemony and the inherent limitations of classroom teaching do not cancel out the emancipatory potential of critical pedagogy, however. Although bottlenecks occur, new thresholds are also crossed in the process. The question then perhaps is how to lessen the bottlenecks. I mentioned a few suggestions for addressing bottlenecks such as "hesitancy to name racism" and "individualist attribution error" in Chapter 6. In the following section, I will elaborate on suggestions for the remaining four bottlenecks in the hopes that these can augment the emancipatory potential of the forms of critical pedagogy presented in this study. A full list of suggestions for critical pedagogy methods is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Bottlenecks, Examples and Suggestions for Critical Pedagogy Methods*

| Bottleneck | Example | Suggestions for Critical Pedagogy Methods |
|---|---|---|
| indiscriminate empathy and defending regressive perspectives | defending Japanese internment camps | Teach that understanding the rationale behind a historical decision or behavior does not entail agreeing with or excusing it.<br><br>Teach hegemony, consent, and their effect (that what appears "neutral" in fact supports the current social order). Teach how the oppressed therefore can sometimes unwittingly act as sub-oppressors.<br><br>Do not try to be neutral or avoid scrutinizing particular values/common sense that support the current social order. |
| hesitancy to name racism | substituting "some people" for "people of color" | Explain that it is not impolite or offensive to call something racist, particularly because racism is a structural and institutionalized issue, not just a problem within individuals. |
| individualist attribution error | faulting individual police rather than institutional racism | Explicitly teach definitions and examples of structural racism/sexism/other forms of oppression and contrast these with definitions and examples of individual prejudices and discrimination. |
| justification via comparison thinking | not recognizing sexism in the US because women have fewer rights in other countries | Teach how oppression operates at various levels, and that we should not sanction one type because it appears less egregious than another. |
| belief in the inevitability of progress | "we always come to a good place" (Amina); things "happen the way they should in due time" (Diane) | Pair teaching of historical resistance with conversations on what might have resulted if the resistance had *not* occurred to show how progress is not inevitable.<br><br>Explain how hegemony maintains widespread consent to the current social order, reducing the likelihood of future progress. |

| little interest in political participation beyond voting | "I feel like it's a lot of pressure put on those type of people" (Diane) | Explain that students in critical classrooms are particularly well-positioned to take action, because they are the few who understand how hegemony ensures that most other people will act against their own interests.<br><br>Provide opportunities for students to engage in political action so that the concept becomes less abstract and they gain civic efficacy.<br><br>If pain from sociopolitical awareness is a concern, involve students in political movements that mediate this pain through a sense of purpose and solidarity with others. |
| --- | --- | --- |

***Suggestions for addressing indiscriminate empathy and defending regressive perspectives.*** Both teachers wanted students to develop empathy and ability to understand historical standpoints that may be difficult to comprehend in our current time period, such as support for slavery or the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. In interviews, several students said that one important lesson they had learned in their U.S. history class is that you have to understand how mindsets differed in the past in order to understand how something like Jim Crow segregation could be tolerated and even advocated. The unintended consequence of this, however, was that students thought they therefore should not criticize the advocates of such reprehensible policies. For instance one Black student said the class helped her see the white supremacists' side, an outcome the teacher did not intend and that may moderate her outrage about past and present racism and hinder her motivation to actively fight it.

The implication of this is that teachers must ensure students comprehend the difference between *understanding* a past action or viewpoint and viewing it as *justified*. Students should learn that understanding why a person in history might behave a certain way does not mean the person or group is worthy of defense or that they cannot still be angry about the action. Teachers should encourage students to condemn oppression and criticize oppressors even when they understand the historical contexts that might lead oppressors to justify their actions.

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An important caveat to this, however, is that teachers should also help students understand that the oppressed can sometimes act as sub-oppressors (Freire, 1970). For instance the female students who criticized women for wearing provocative clothing were unwittingly participating in patriarchal discourse. Students need to learn how this can happen and that we therefore distinguish between the subaltern who act in opposition to their own interests and thus contribute to oppression and the actors who benefit from oppression. In order to understand this, students would need a grasp of how hegemony operates through consent. Such an understanding would help students determine which historical actors to critique, which to empathize with, and which deserve both critique and empathy. An example of the latter might be low-income men that enlisted to fight in the Vietnam War. Although they contributed to the oppression and slaughter of millions of innocent civilians, they also were victims of economic and often racial oppression that left them with few other options.

Related to students' growing abilities to empathize and understand multiple perspectives is their occasional taking up of oppressive arguments. Whereas some students stopped at withholding judgment of white supremacists, others actually defended chauvinism, such as the choice to intern Japanese Americans or a 1950s husband's expectation that his wife should put his needs before hers. Also contributing to this may have been Ms. Bowling's encouragement of dissent from the majority viewpoint. The students who defended these chauvinisms were practicing their skill of dissent from both the majority and the authority (i.e. the teacher). Also enabling this may have been both teachers' hesitancy to impose values on students. Both mentioned that they should not force their opinions or values on students, and Ms. Ray said she did not want to oppose the values they had learned from families or churches but rather just have them think critically about all sides. At the same time, they were promoting certain values such

as empathy and respect for difference. In this way the teachers revealed their own contradictory consciousness in that they wanted to promote conscientization but at the same time subscribed to the liberal hegemonic notion that schools are value-neutral (Au & Apple, 2011) and therefore teachers should avoid imposing ideological positions.

However for critical pedagogy to have any chance of dissolving the dominant ideologies inherited from the broader culture, teachers cannot take a neutral position. Critical educators cannot stop at facilitating students' questioning of regressive hegemony, but rather must facilitate students' direct opposition of it. If practitioners take up my suggestion in the last section to teach the concepts of hegemony and how it operates, they will have to teach who and what constitute the dominant hegemonic bloc and whose consent this bloc retains. Thus an argument in favor of Japanese internment is no longer one of many viable opinions, but rather an oppressive tool used to sustain hegemony. Social studies scholars have contended that teaching from a moral response stance could be problematic if it "turns history into a set of simplistic moral 'lessons' that are little more than propaganda" (Levstik & Barton, 2001, p. 142). However, the critical pedagogy I advocate does not consist of a set of moral lessons but rather an approach that recognizes that attempts at neutrality only preserve consent to cultural hegemony. Thus allowing students to defend any position can be anti-critical and thus reinforcing of the social order. In other words, there is no neutral position.

*Addressing justification-via-comparison.* Despite all students' ease in identifying historical and contemporary injustices in the U.S., about half said they were either patriotic or were proud to live here. Most cited as their reason the rights that are better protected in the US than elsewhere, such as the freedom of speech and religion. While it is important for students to recognize the relative advantages they enjoy as Americans, the risk in measuring the US against

other countries is that students may not perceive injustices here as particularly urgent. Since women in Cambodia are at greater risk for domestic violence (according to Angela), women in the US perhaps would be unjustified in complaining about the objectification of women in popular culture for instance. Students' perception that communism results in extreme restriction of personal freedoms left capitalism appearing benign in comparison. Comparing the shortcomings of various economic systems and the dangerous results of patriarchy across national contexts may hinder students' drive to change systems at home. Perhaps part of the reason racism and xenophobia were the most commonly mentioned issues is that students saw these as afflicting the US more so than other countries. Another problem with justifying systems by comparison is that, in the context of a history class, students may view current social problems as better than they were in the past and therefore not in urgent need of action.

The implication for educators is that students must learn how oppression operates at various levels, and that we should not sanction one type because it appears less egregious than another. We can condemn domestic abuse while still critiquing the more subtle ways patriarchy harms women who are not physically abused but suppressed in other ways, such as through expectations that they pursue unachievable ideals of physical beauty. While Americans cannot be executed for blasphemy or certain religious beliefs as people are in other countries, students should learn how nationalism erodes Muslims' and other non-Christian individuals' freedom from discrimination (Abu El-Haj, 2010). Teachers should not assume that a critique of the latter diminishes appreciation for the former, just as students should not assume that appreciation for American privileges precludes the ability to critique the ways these privileges are not equally distributed across groups.

***Addressing the belief in the inevitability of progress and low interest in political***

***participation.*** Some comments in class and interviews reflected the modernist "march of

progress" belief that history has a way of correcting itself. In this view, the gradual triumph of

rationality over baser instincts such as intolerance has led to an expansion of freedom and equity

(Werner, 1998)—an expansion that we should expect to continue.  Several students made

statements like, "We always come to a good place" (Amina, Interview, April 1, 2015) and

everything "happens the way it should in due time" (Diane, Interview, April 8, 2015). If it is true

that problems always get resolved eventually, then there seems no urgent need for action now.

We can understand why students might have this view, particularly during a history class in

which the curriculum contains numerous examples of those in power righting past wrongs:

abolishing slavery, expanding the right to vote, protecting minority rights, signing nuclear

nonproliferation treaties, etc.

Additionally, teaching that oppression is always met with resistance buttresses this belief

by communicating there has been and will always be progressive forces fighting against

injustices. Ms. Ray especially emphasized this point out of her care for the students. She said it

caused some students grief to be aware of injustice and wanted students to know there always

opportunities for opposing it. At the same time, she did not want to pressure them to oppose it

themselves, in case such work would exacerbate pain they already experience as members of

marginalized groups.

What then becomes the student's own role in fighting injustice? Since organized

resistance inevitably arises to any contemporary injustices, the student has the choice to join

these movements or refrain in the expectation that progress will once again triumph. To join,

therefore, would require an additional motivation (such as personal fulfillment), given justice is

likely to prevail with or without the student's participation. Joining is also the harder option—it requires time, effort, and potential risks ranging from ostracization to arrest.

As the Freire realized later in his life (Au, 2011), students are unlikely to make such sacrifices just because they have become critically conscious. Students must feel both that their participation is needed and that it would be effective (Levinson, 2012). In terms of the former, teachers must be careful to pair their teaching of historical resistance with conversations on what might have resulted if the resistance had *not* occurred. They must acknowledge that the expansion of rights was not inevitable and that therefore future progress is not guaranteed. While teaching hegemony, they should guide students to infer that it is highly unlikely that large portions of the population will oppose oppression, given the power of dominant ideology to shape their beliefs and actions. For this reason it is even more imperative that the students in critical classes take action, because they are the few who understand how hegemony ensures that most people will act against their own interests (Gramsci, 1971).

The second aim, that students gain a sense of efficacy, is a strong predictor of future civic engagement (Anyon, 2011). To achieve this aim, educators should provide opportunities for students to actually engage in political action and practice acting as historical agents (den Heyer, 2003). Writing their representatives about issues they care about is a start. Even more efficacy-building would be presenting research on community needs to local leaders (Rubin, 2007) or lobbying, attending a rally, or engaging in other forms of political activism (Stitzlein, 2014). Research has shown the power of politically active young people when they are motivated by an issue and have the opportunity to join others in protest (Gonzalez, 2008; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Vélez et al., 2008). These activities also enhance positive self-concepts and achievement among low-income and urban youth by establishing counternarratives to their

positioning as social problems (Anyon, 2011). Thus critical educators should pair their work on conscientization with efficacy-building work that engages students in authentic praxis (Freire, 1970).

   **Summary: What should critical pedagogy in history class look like?** Critical theory has been criticized for focusing more on identifying negative elements of social structures than on proposing means for redressing these, and critical pedagogy has been criticized for being overly theoretical and lacking in concrete guidance for educators (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). This dissertation has presented some possibilities for critical approaches to history education, along with bottlenecks and suggestions for reducing these. Figure 1 (presented in Chapter 4) summarized the approaches I observed in these classrooms (e.g., unfixing opinions, encouraging dissent especially from the majority, and encouraging students to call out injustice and consider historical examples of resistance to imagine methods of correcting current inequities). These, along with the suggestions I made in Table 4, offer a foundation upon which future researchers and practitioners can continue developing a grounded theory of practice for critical pedagogy in social studies classrooms.

   While teaching empathy and multiple perspectives, educators should also guide students to recognize past and present actions that are unworthy of empathy or defense, and those that invite both. They should be careful to avoid a simplistic oppressor-oppressed dichotomy and instead teach how members of oppressed groups can act as sub-oppressors (Freire, 1970). In these cases both empathy and critique might be warranted.

   It is equally important that students learn that resistance has not and will not always triumph over oppression and that their participation may be necessary to develop a progressive hegemony.  Educators must therefore teach *why* their participation is necessary and how to

ensure their participation is effective (i.e. instill efficacy). To understand the *why*, students will need a grasp of how common sense guarantees that most people will consent to the dominant order. This points to the *how* as well: students can contribute to progressive hegemony by raising the critical consciousness of others. Awareness how they might contribute to progressive hegemony may help students develop greater efficacy and stronger identities to resist oppression.

Thus understanding of hegemony will also allow students to better identify more subtle instances of oppression, such as through psychic violence (King & Woodson, 2015) rather than physical violence, denial of rights, or other recognizable types of discrimination.  They might help students see that

> power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere. . . . power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault, 1980, p. 93)

 In turn, students may feel less lulled into complacency by the relatively lower levels of government-sanctioned physical violence in the US than elsewhere. Such complacency is likely to be detrimental to political action.

In sum, critical history pedagogy should teach the concepts of ideology, hegemony, and contradictory consciousness. Educators should help students, not just ask, but also answer the normative questions that arise in history class. The debate over whether Japanese Americans should have been interned during World War II has a right answer, in the sense that only one answer is consistent with the aim that all humans are equally protected from harm and granted the potential to flourish. Critical teachers should not fear that they are imposing their "own" values (Katz, 2014) but rather recognize how, through reflection on their own contradictory consciousness, they have come to an understanding of normative questions that the common sense of their students (and most people) may be preventing. Teaching for social justice implies a

particular worldview that teachers should not fear proclaiming (Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman, & Terrell, 2009).

In terms of critical citizenship education specifically, teachers should help students understand why the idea of gaining political power may sound either out of reach or undesirable to them—and that the reasons are related to ways in which social and cultural capital are tied to social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986). They should guide students to interrogate and reconsider their own disinterest in light of the role this disinterest plays in maintaining a social order that marginalizes them. Students should not only be provided with examples of youth who are already fighting for social justice, such as Malala Yousafzi, DREAMers, and #BlackLivesMatter protestors, they should also be guided to think about the real consequences of these issues to their own lives and presented specific ways they can involve themselves. For instance, Ms. Ray took another class to the local NAACP office, after which several asked her how they could become a part of the organization. Teachers should certainly encourage voting, but explain why and how transformative social change will require much more from them.

**Implications for Future Research**

As this study is one of the first to use observational and interview data to explore critical pedagogy in history classes, it raises more questions than it answers. One is what other approaches to critical pedagogy are possible? I observed just two teachers, and both were White, middle class women from the same state. Given how much their approaches differed despite these demographic similarities, what other approaches might be observed in critical teachers from different states and countries or of different genders, ages, ethnoracial backgrounds, or other identity markers? For older teachers with more experience both with teaching and with community activism—how might these influence their pedagogies and encouraging of students

to take action? Some teachers may be less concerned about countering the values students have learned at home or at church, particularly those with more experience or from shared ethnoracial backgrounds with their students. What are the similarities and differences among the various approaches, and how do they differentially influence students? Future research could explore the various forms of critical pedagogy of diverse teachers, as well as compare their influences on students' conscientization. Relatedly, how would critical pedagogy in history look with different groups of students, in different regions of the US or other countries, or in schools that allowed more or less autonomy for their teachers? Would students in these various contexts respond differently to critical pedagogy? How might students from higher-income or politically conservative families respond for instance? Would teachers modify their instruction in these contexts, and if so, how?

The study also raises questions about the long-term effects of critical pedagogy in history class. Does it increase the likelihood students will vote and stay politically informed, as other research (Levinson, 2012; Rubin, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) has suggested? For students who did not express a desire to participate politically, could maturation or future experiences in college, work, or other activities provide the extra push that they need? Does critical pedagogy impact the way they interpret media, their preferences for economic redistribution, their political opinions, or other beliefs or behaviors? Might they go on to join or create critical communities, as Angela's implied may be possible when she said she planned to pass her knowledge onto her children? After all, the suggestions raised here will not on their own change society—students will need to spread conscientization and join with others in order to create the critical mass needed for social transformation to occur.

The next question then is: how might critical pedagogy in history class, *combined* with

extra-curricular engagement in the community, make political engagement seem less abstract and unappealing to bolster students' civic efficacy? Other studies have showed how politically active young people can be when given the opportunity and motivated by an issue (Gonzales, 2008; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Vélez et al., 2008), including for example Latina/o immigrant students in the deep South (Parkhouse & Freeman, in press). Moya's (2012) dissertation compared the critical civic development of Latina/os in a critical social studies class with those in a youth organizing group, but did not include participants who fell into both categories. How might these two contexts synergistically support one another in the aim of promoting political knowledge and activism? These are just a few of the questions future research should explore.

**Conclusion**

Since the 1970s, research in education has revealed how American schooling reinforces capitalist structures and reproduces social inequality of various forms (Bowles & Gintis; Foley, 1990; Giroux, 1981; McLaren, 1989), as well as how these are resisted by both students (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Giroux, 1983; Scott, 1990; Willis, 1977), and teachers (Freire, 1970, 1998; hooks, 1994). I have sought to expand upon this work by analyzing how critical pedagogy presents opportunities for teachers and students to resist together. I looked most specifically at the first step toward resistance: conscientization.

Students in both contexts described their critiques of American society (e.g. racism, discrimination against immigrants, not enough help for the poor) and believed being critical was a characteristic of, not a threat to, good citizenship. They described their teachers as good citizens as well, and indicated that their teachers' willingness to have candid discussions of injustices garnered students' trust and greater interest in the subject of history. Even in these

progressive classrooms, however, dominant ideologies of individualism, meritocracy, and inevitable progress sustained students' common sense in some ways, particularly related to sexism and capitalism. However, these two classrooms provide promising initial contributions to a framework of critical pedagogy in U.S. History classrooms. Moving forward, critical educators can consider adding to this framework explicit teaching of how power operates through hegemony so that students gain tools for questioning their own contradictory consciousness. Although schools are reflections of the dominant society that maintains them, and therefore limited in their potential for inciting social transformation, as long as there are critical teachers, schools are more hopeful sites for conscientization than perhaps anywhere else (e.g., church, family, media).  Once conscientized and able to join or create critical communities in the future, students may gain the power necessary for reversing our neoliberal course and finally working toward the more equitable society envisioned by critical theorists through much of the last century.

# APPENDIX A: KEY CONCEPTS DEFINED

American exceptionalism—the belief that the US is significantly unique from all other countries as a result of its having been founded and continually shaped by the principles of personal liberty and democratic ideals. As a result the US is an exemplar, in this view, which other countries should strive to emulate, and the US is therefore justified in its attempts to help (or force) other countries to do so (Tyrell, 1991).

banking model of education—a metaphor used by Paolo Freire (1970) to describe most traditional education in which the student's mind is viewed as an empty vessel into which a teacher deposits information. Critical pedagogy would be its antithesis.

bottleneck—a narrowing a student must move through on the path toward greater sociopolitical awareness or critical consciousness (Gorski, Osei-Kofi, Sapp, & Zenkof, 2012; Meyer & Land, 2005).

common sense— a term used by Gramsci (1971) to describe the unsystematic and incoherent knowledge one has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed.

conscientization – development of *critical consciousness* or the awareness of systems of power, oppression, and other social injustices, and knowledge of how to take action to challenge these (Freire, 1970).

contradictory consciousness—two simultaneously-held beliefs that conflict with one another; generally one is influenced by *good sense*, or practical wisdom based in lived experience, and the other is influenced by *common sense*, which is knowledge one has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed (Gramsci, 1971).

critical pedagogy— aims for liberation of the oppressed through conscientization (or critical consciousness raising). This can be pursued through dialogics, problem-posing methodology, and praxis—or reflection plus action (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1981).

critical theory—a broad range of approaches in social science and humanities that attempt to understand the sources of social inequalities with the aim of eliminating oppression, often through questioning of some of the premises of liberalism (Smith & Riley, 2009).

culture industry—a term used by Theodor Adorno to describe the force by which the logic of capitalist institutions is rationalized and standardized (Darder, 2012).

dominant ideology—a term used by Marx to describe the norms and beliefs that benefit the ruling or capitalist class but that oppressed groups also subscribe to, ultimately reinforcing their own oppression. Dominant ideologies (such as meritocracy, individualism, and a belief in inevitable social progress in our current American society) often pacify oppressed groups as they offer what appear to be possible alternatives to the current social order (Smith & Riley, 2009).

false consciousness—a term used by some Marxists to describe a condition in which people are content despite material or other disadvantages. One example would be poor Americans favoring market capitalism because they erroneously believe both that it is inevitable and natural, and that it allows them a way to scale the socioeconomic ladder (Levinson, 2011).

good sense—a term used by Gramsci (1971) to mean practical wisdom based in lived experience.

hegemony— Prior to Gramsci, the term was used to refer to the dominance or authority of one nation-state over others. Gramsci (1971) redefined hegemony to mean the formation of consent to a social order among a class or group. The most common usage today is consent to an oppressive social order (or what Gramsci called, *regressive hegemony*); however Gramsci also discussed *progressive hegemony*, through which subordinate groups can also win consent as they attempt to gain power. Others have referred to this as *counterhegemony*, although Gramsci himself never used this term.

internal colonialism— domination of the group in power over an oppressed group within the same borders through economic, political, cultural, or other means (Tejeda, Espinoza, & Gutiérrez, 2003).

mystification— a term used by Marx to describe a phenomenon within capitalist societies that prevents the working class from realizing that they have become objects rather than subjects capable of creative production (Smith & Riley, 2009).

neocolonial—pertaining to continued domination over a country, region, or group of people through such means as economic control, political influence, or cultural imperialism (Simmons & Sefa Dei, 2012).

postcolonial—aware and critical of the "continuously changing, adapting, persistent colonial and neocolonial structures and relations that have chained everyone" (Rhee & Subedi, 2014, p. 342).

postcritical ethnography—a theory and method of research that addresses an ethical commitment to the researched by turning critique back on the research project and researcher herself (Noblit, Murillo, & Flores, 2004).

reification— a term used by Marx to describe the means by which social constructions, such as race and class for example, become perceived as objective and permanent realities unrelated to the social forces that produced them (Smith & Riley, 2009).

thresholds—preliminary concepts that must first be understood or skills that must be acquired on a student's path toward sociopolitical awareness or critical consciousness (Gorski, Osei-Kofi, Sapp, & Zenkof, 2012; Meyer & Land, 2005).

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**
Student Interview Protocol (Semi-structured)

Part I: Opinions about the US

1.  Will you tell me a little about your opinions of the United States?

2.  Do you think the U.S. government usually makes good decisions?
    a.  Has your opinion been influenced by what you've learned in Ms. _'s class in any ways?

3.  Do you agree with most U.S. foreign policies/decisions? (Do you think the US has made good choices on how to interact with other countries?)
    a.  Has your opinion been influenced by what you've learned in Ms.  class?

4.  Do you think the government does too much, too little, or the right amount in terms of assisting the poor?
    a.  Has your opinion been influenced by what you've learned in Ms. __ class?

5.  If you held political office, what would you change about the U.S.?

6.  Have you learned anything in Ms. __'s class that was different from what you'd heard or read about the US in the past?
    Is there more than one way to understand or interpret history?
        (If yes) Is that something you were aware of before Ms. __'s class?

7.  How would you describe Ms. ___'s opinions about the U.S.?

8.  Let's talk about power. What have you learned in this class about power within the US?
    1.  About power among different nations in the world?
    2.  Among social groups within the US?
    3.  About the power individuals have? How much power do you have?
    4.  How can you get more power?
    5.  How are your answers informed by what you've learned in USH this year?

PART II: Opinions about citizenship and political life

1.  Do you consider yourself patriotic? Do you think it is good to be patriotic?
2.  Do you consider yourself a critical person? What does that mean to you?
3.  Do you consider yourself a political person? What does that mean to you?
4.  How would you define citizenship?
5.  How would you describe a "good citizen"? Would you say you are a good citizen?
6.  Do you think the US equally protects all citizens?
7.  Do you plan to be politically active in the future? If yes, how? If no, why not?
8.  Has taking this class changed how you think about your role as a citizen in any ways?

Teacher Interview Protocol: First Interview (Semi-structured)

1. How would you define your goals as a US History teacher?
      a. How do you strive to reach these goals in your teaching?
      b. Why do you believe these goals are important?

2. Do you think part of a history teacher's role is to teach about power?

3. Do you worry that teaching about power imbalances or injustices will make students less patriotic/ frustrated / disillusioned?

4. Are there any other ways you attempt to teach students to be critically conscious/aware?

5. Have you seen evidence that a student has developed critical awareness while in your class? (Please explain.)
      Probes if needed:
          1. How did the student(s) develop critical awareness of power structures?
          2. What effects did this have on the students' political/civic interest or engagement?
          3. Did this appear to have any negative impacts on the student(s)?
          4. Did you perceive the student's cultural background to be a factor in this critical awareness development?

      Do you perceive this critical awareness to be in conflict with or a threat to allegiance to the US?

6. What is your conception or definition of a "good citizen"?

7. Would you consider yourself patriotic? (Please explain).

Teacher Interview Protocol: Second Interview (Semi-structured)

1. Now that you've read your students' interview transcripts, to what extent do you feel your goals as a US history teacher were being met?

2. What surprised you in their responses, if anything?
   a. Were you surprised by their opinions and attitudes towards the US?
   b. Did you feel they expressed cynicism or disillusionment?
   c. Do you think students' responses aligned well with comments and writing from class, or do you think they might have been holding back?
   d. Are you surprised by the government decisions they said they disagreed with?
   e. Were you surprised by their responses to questions on patriotism?

3. Now that you've read the transcripts, to what extent do you feel students expressed critical consciousness?
   a. Are you surprised by this or not surprised?
   b. Do you feel students have a good sense of how democratic the US is?
   c. Do you feel students have a good sense of the relation between money and power in this country?
   d. How much of a role do you feel you played in their critical citizenship development?

4. Now that you've read the transcripts, to what extent do you feel students expressed being empowered?
   a. in sense of feeling that they have power now
   b. in sense of feeling that they will have power in the future
   c. in sense of knowing how they can make changes
   d. in sense of intending to act in order to make changes
   e. What do you think are the factors involved/at play here? (in the extent to which they are/aren't empowered?) Was US History class at play?
   f. Do you feel students have a good sense of the constraints and opportunities regarding power that ordinary people have?

5. What limitations exist, if any, in student critical consciousness development?

6. Does the racial makeup of your class affect the way you talk/teach about racism in US history?

7. What would you do if you had a student whose values were antithetical to the aims of social justice?

8. Has participating in this study change the way you teach in any ways?

# APPENDIX C: COMPLETE CODEBOOK

| CODE | # OF INSTANCES |
|---|---|
| collaboration among teachers | 3 |
| hope in next generation | 6 |
| outside knowledge | 21 |
|     their own analysis | 1 |
|     lived experiences | 12 |
|     other classes | 9 |
|     church/mosque/kingdom hall | 9 |
|     bringing outside knowledge into class | 8 |
|     social media & pop culture | 16 |
|     cultural critiques | 1 |
|     news | 10 |
|         many don't know about Baltimore riots | 1 |
| teacher's goals | 2 |
|     spare them "grief" | 12 |
|     "act like stakes are high" | 1 |
|     to model change role, not just historian | 2 |
|     prepare to challenge unjust systems | 6 |
|     preparing students for success in society | 7 |
|     students a positive force in world | 3 |
|     not impose her own values | 9 |
|         exceptions | 4 |
|     "historical grounding" of current things | 6 |
|     showing how Ss are part of history | 6 |
|     "evaluating things from different sides" | 2 |
|     thinking critically/read the world | 3 |
|     teaching to "be better people" | 4 |
| concern re: cynicism | 10 |
|     impact-or not-of personality | 5 |
| avoiding oversimplification | 17 |
|     groups temporarily disappear in curriculum | 4 |
|     from 2D to "3D understanding" | 7 |
|     because it's boring | 1 |
|     "they need to be able to visualize" | 3 |
|     worry that Ss are oversimplifying | 4 |
|         examples of simplifications | 14 |
|         examples of ahistorical thinking | 5 |
|     complicating Ss understanding | 29 |
|         evidence of complicated thinking | 17 |
|         busting myths | 11 |
|     "I don't mean to say"/"I don't want to say" | 13 |
| Common core/standardization | 10 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| avoiding textbook | | 1 |
| retaining information | 12 | |
| class content mentioned in interviews | | 3 |
| countering suggestions for critical pedagogy | 0 | |
| is telling a story banking? | | 1 |
| don't critique textbook. Ditch it. | | 2 |
| telling stories | 9 | |
| stories to develop perspective-taking | | 4 |
| entertaining students | | 3 |
| assets for teaching critical citizenship | 4 | |
| class context: homogeneity | | 4 |
| splitting class into 2 years | | 2 |
| student's personal struggles & connections | | 12 |
| teaching multiple years | | 7 |
| show them how they play a role and are influenced by history | | 2 |
| limitations to teaching critical citizenship | 3 | |
| desensitization? | | 3 |
| Ss seek good/redeeming/rationale | | 3 |
| Ss don't know their own social status | | 1 |
| trying to get "right answer" | | 2 |
| students think it's "too much" | | 4 |
| perceives not all as wanting to be agents | | 4 |
| resources/fewer limitations students have | | 1 |
| not enough time | | 4 |
| not sure what "sinks in" | | 3 |
| developmental stage/privilege | | 15 |
| ability to articulate | | 1 |
| must decide right v. wrong | | 1 |
| USH curriculum | | 6 |
| drawbacks of class demographics | | 5 |
| current injustices | 7 | |
| students uninterested | | 13 |
| acknowledged only | | 5 |
| injustices they care about | | 9 |
| homophobia | | 3 |
| police brutality/criminal justice | | 21 |
| education | | 11 |
| progress not perfect | 10 | |
| world will never be perfect | | 3 |
| Citizenship | 6 | |
| be critical (of news, e.g.) | | 3 |
| pluralism | | 1 |
| listen to others' stories | | 2 |
| voting: required or not | | 5 |
| justice-oriented | | 5 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | doesn't break laws/helps | | 8 |
| | transnational citizenship | | 3 |
| | doesn't require empathy | | 1 |
| | classical liberalism | | 4 |
| | "doing citizenship" | | 5 |
| patriotism | | | 11 |
| | no choice of where born | | 2 |
| | Ts shouldn't be uncritical | | 8 |
| | prevents some Ts from truth teaching | | 5 |
| | respect for ancestors coming here | | 1 |
| | intended to have multiple definitions in liberal democracy | | 2 |
| | doesn't mean blind support | | 3 |
| | | can be critical | 8 |
| | | | critique->more love for US | 1 |
| | change agents as patriots | | 1 |
| | unpatriotic | | 17 |
| | | critical stance | 3 |
| | confusion/simplification | | 14 |
| | | to develop citizenship skills | 4 |
| dialogue | | | 17 |
| | admit Ts don't know all | | 1 |
| | to "bring them to life" | | 2 |
| | students as teachers | | 6 |
| | | only dialoguing about what interests them | 1 |
| | | "let them have a voice" | 9 |
| | | | drawing on multiple student perspectives | 5 |
| | | contributing material | 7 |
| | teaching them to question | | 34 |
| | | skepticism | 8 |
| | | critical media literacy | 13 |
| | encouraging dissent | | 23 |
| | | "devil's advocate" | 6 |
| | difficult dialogues | | 3 |
| | | avoiding due to time | 1 |
| | | not being afraid/fear | 4 |
| | too much dialogue? | | 7 |
| "pushing them" | | | 12 |
| | class trust | | 14 |
| | breaking down boundaries | | 4 |
| | "what you guys need to realize" | | 18 |
| | unsolidified/fying opinions | | 8 |
| | | not sharing T opinion | 2 |
| | | "cliffhanger" | 2 |
| arousing interest | | | 13 |
| | taking interest outside of class | | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | videos/web shares of the day | | 12 |
| | through what interests T & gauging | | 4 |
| | through reflecting on T's boredom | | 3 |
| perspective-taking exercises | | | 12 |
| | use metaphors/allegories | | 1 |
| | results: empathy/connection (or lack) | | 24 |
| | to understand choices of people in past | | 14 |
| | to teach flaws | | 12 |
| Balanced teaching/well-rounded approach | | | 15 |
| | "couch oppression in resistance" | | 5 |
| | multiple/different perspectives | | 11 |
| | | overly empathetic | 4 |
| American Dream | | | 14 |
| | critiquing bootstrap thinking | | 2 |
| | we preserve rags to riches myth | | 3 |
| America is flawed | | | 16 |
| | dishonest to its people | | 7 |
| | blame govt for people's prejudices | | 1 |
| | young country | | 3 |
| | justice system | | 3 |
| | disliked by other countries | | 8 |
| | representatives not representative | | 3 |
| | imperialism | | 22 |
| | | cultural (thru assimilation) | 4 |
| | | overprioritizing national self-interest | 6 |
| | | Ss want US to stay out of foreign affairs | 23 |
| | | foreign policy | 11 |
| | hypocritical/double standard | | 20 |
| | | restricting freedoms | 10 |
| | students experience firsthand | | 1 |
| | so set low expectations | | 3 |
| | "honesty requires" we acknowledge | | 22 |
| | calling it out | | 25 |
| | students indignant re: past decisions | | 13 |
| | | segregation | 2 |
| | | Indian Removal Act | 7 |
| | | atomic bomb | 5 |
| | showing through others' perceptions of US | | 2 |
| | inequality in America | | 10 |
| | | unequal access to the vote | 4 |
| | | Does US equally protect all citizens? | 8 |
| | | Nativism | 7 |
| | | classes/poverty | 16 |
| | | wages | 1 |
| | | anti labor unions | 1 |

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | discrimination against poor | 4 |
| | | | problems with tax code | 10 |
| | | | problems with welfare | 17 |
| | | | gov't should give jobs/ed/housing | 5 |
| | | religious intolerance | | 9 |
| | | | Anti-Semitism | 2 |
| | | sexism | | 23 |
| | | | single mothers/teen pregnancy | 4 |
| | | | heterosexism | 12 |
| | | racism | | 44 |
| | | | Mexican Americans | 2 |
| | | | appropriation | 1 |
| | | | misinformation | 1 |
| | | | slow progress | 14 |
| | | | no progress | 8 |
| | | | | segregation | 3 |
| | | | against Japanese and Chinese | 10 |
| | | | against Native Americans | 8 |
| | | | tokenism | 1 |
| | America may fall | | | 4 |
| | superpower status | | | 13 |
| | but injustices seem over? | | | 10 |
| | showing through primary sources | | | 6 |
| teaching failures/flaws of political leaders | | | | 23 |
| | T explaining/defending choices | | | 9 |
| | students defending injustices/leaders | | | 12 |
| immigration | | | | 25 |
| | conflating immigrant with undocumented immigrant | | | 1 |
| | conflating Indians with Immigrants | | | 1 |
| | policy ideas | | | 5 |
| | immigrant optimism | | | 3 |
| past affects present/future | | | | 12 |
| disillusionment | | | | 5 |
| | inevitability of (war, oppression, etc) | | | 6 |
| | low trust in institutions | | | 20 |
| | would happen after HS if not now | | | 2 |
| | hard to measure | | | 5 |
| | treat with examples of change agents | | | 5 |
| | | untreatable? | | 1 |
| | replace with action | | | 4 |
| anti or under-critical? | | | | 23 |
| | 3rd phase of power | | | 6 |
| | Ss believe we've progressed | | | 2 |
| | individualistic thinking vs. systems | | | 21 |
| | | bootstrap thinking/victim blaming | | 9 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | condemning riots | 5 |
| | sexism | | | 16 |
| | | internalized sexism | | 5 |
| | "taking advantage" | | | 6 |
| | withholding judgment | | | 8 |
| | | out of respect? | | 1 |
| | "we always come to a good place" | | | 3 |
| | reluctance to call out racism | | | 10 |
| | classical liberalism | | | 4 |
| | students defending injustices | | | 14 |
| America IS superior/special | | | | 12 |
| | America helps others | | | 8 |
| | "I like the US"/proud to live here | | | 14 |
| | students hoping to find redeeming qualities | | | 7 |
| | America is better than some countries | | | 17 |
| | gratitude toward American privilege | | | 6 |
| materialism | | | | 4 |
| | confusion about capitalism/communism | | | 13 |
| | fear of communism | | | 34 |
| | critique of capitalism | | | 16 |
| | | critique of Red Scare NOT communism | | 5 |
| | | conflate communism with totalitarianism | | 13 |
| | thinking materialistically | | | 10 |
| understanding power/power literacy | | | | 5 |
| | gov't vs. corporations | | | 15 |
| | most important is speaking out | | | 5 |
| | | low trust in freedoms protection | | 4 |
| | power as negative | | | 6 |
| | organizing/unifying needed | | | 6 |
| | primary inequity is economic | | | 4 |
| | intersectionality | | | 10 |
| | domination not accepted | | | 14 |
| | to "scratch my back" | | | 5 |
| | so not left in "that uncomplicated place" | | | 2 |
| | "not just one thing" | | | 4 |
| | | political AND economic | | 3 |
| | as part & parcel of USH | | | 5 |
| | social movements | | | 25 |
| | | allies | | 7 |
| | | strategies | | 36 |
| | | counterculture/culture shifts | | 9 |
| | | as scary | | 5 |
| | not immediately linking power to inequity | | | 4 |
| politics | | | | 13 |
| | politicians corrupt | | | 4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | understanding barriers to democracy | | 13 |
| | little interest in participation | | 10 |
| | party affiliation | | 4 |
| power of individuals | | | 3 |
| | people don't know their own power | | 1 |
| | knowledge is power | | 6 |
| | | anger--> want more knowledge | 2 |
| | power as influence | | 6 |
| | need group/collective | | 9 |
| | students see as abstract/unachievable, not them | | 11 |
| | past examples of powerful individuals | | 8 |
| | | ordinary individuals | 13 |
| | | | B and W have power/influence | 1 |
| | | | neglected key figures | 8 |
| | T trying to empower | | 12 |
| | | mention of "action" | 9 |
| | through writing/lobbying | | 6 |
| | overstatement of power of individuals | | 9 |
| | power of youth | | 25 |
| | | young people don't have power | 5 |
| | | use social media | 3 |
| | | school resistance | 1 |
| | through voting | | 25 |

(handout used in Ms. Ray's and Ms. Bowling's class)

*Housekeeping Monthly* 13 May 1955



## The good wife's guide

● Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.

● Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary peopl

● Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.

● Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.

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● Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper etc and then run a dustcloth over the tables.

● Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.

● Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimise all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet. .

● Be happy to see him.

● Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him. ,

● Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first – remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.

● Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.

● Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquillity where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.

● Don't greet him with complaints and problems.

● Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that d

● Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or hav him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.

● Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothin and pleasant voice.

● Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will alwa exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.

A good wife always knows her place.

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